A Short History of Lithuania to 1569

by Josef A. Katzel

Centennial Edition
(1921–2021)

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On the cover: a coat of arms based on a design by Tadas Daugirdas, depicting the historic knight of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the emblem of the Lithuanian Republic, proclaimed in 1918. Original 1921 design recreated, in English, by Oleksii Kot (kot2dart@gmail.com).

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As an expression of a son's love and devotion, this book is dedicated to my dear mother.

Josef A. Katzel in Berlin, April 1928 (portrait by G. Klemm)

Table of Contents

Introduction

Preface

The First Era
Legendary—Prior to the Beginning of the 13th century

Chapter 1
The origins of the Lithuanian people. Their language. The tribes of Lithuania.

Chapter 2
The origins of early Lithuanian religion. The natural world and mankind from the perspective of early Lithuanian religion. Mythology. Gods and goddesses. Religious cults. Romuva. The pagan priesthood. Kriwe-Kriwajto. Religious rites. Fortune-telling. Legendary heroes.

Chapter 3
Dwellings. Occupations and commerce. Record-keeping. Written language. Folk songs. Cities. Government authority. Princes. Laws. Military campaigns.

Chapter 4
Lithuanian relations with Normans, Russians, Poles, and Germans. The Livonian and Teutonic Orders. The beginning of Lithuanian government. A characterization of the legendary period.

The Second Era
The Golden Age—From 1204 to 1386

Chapter 5
Ryngold. Mindaugas. The pursuit of national Lithuanian unity. Lithuania and the Livonian Order. Lithuania and Western Rus'. The rebellion against the Teutonic Order in Lithuania. The death of Mindaugas.

Chapter 6
The Dark Ages. Treniota. Shvarn. Vaišelga. Traidenis. The threat of Lithuanian national collapse. The reign of a new Samogitian dynasty. Butvydas. Vytenis.

Chapter 7
Gediminas. Relations with Rus'. Relations with the Teutonic and Livonian Orders. The first clashes with the Princes of Moscow in Pskov and Novgorod. The influence of Rus' during the era of Gediminas. Gediminas's domestic policy.

Chapter 8
The state of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after Gediminas's death. Political turmoil prior to the reign of Algirdas. War against the Germanic knights. Kęstutis. The annexation of Russian principalities and Lithuanian relations with Rus'. War against Poland over the Galicia-Volhynian lands. The growth of Russian influence. A general overview of Algirdas's rule.

Chapter 9
The accession of Jogaila to the throne. Relations with Kęstutis. Conflict with Vytautas the Great. Changes in relations between Vytautas, Jogaila, and the Teutonic Order.

The Third Era
Preparation for a Real Union—From 1386 to 1569

Chapter 10
Events in Poland leading up to 1386. The marriage of Jadwiga and Jogaila. The First Union of Lublin. The aftermath of the Union. The Christianization of Lithuania. Conflict with Vytautas.

Chapter 11
Vytautas the Great. Vytautas's attempts to abolish the system of local governance in Lithuania. The annexation of Smolensk. The issue of Podolia. The Treaty of Salynas. Military campaigns against the Tatars. Defeat on the Vorskla River and its consequences. The 1401 Treaty of Vilnius. Relations with Moscow and the Teutonic Order. The Battle of Grunwald and its significance for Lithuania. Vytautas's political policy following the Battle of Grunwald.

Chapter 12
The 1413 Union of Horodło. The consequences of the Union. The separation of the Lithuanian Orthodox Church from the Moscow Metropolitanate. Lithuanian foreign affairs. The Christianization of Samogitia. The 1422 Treaty of Melno. Vytautas's plans to separate Lithuania from Poland. The congresses in Lutsk and Vilnius. Vytautas's domestic policy. The development of commerce. The status of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by the end of Vytautas's rule.

Chapter 13
Švitrigaila. Sigismund Kęstutaitis. The 1432 Union of Grodno. Sigismund's struggle against Švitrigaila. Casimir IV Jagiellon. The status of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the first half of Casimir's rule. The election of Casimir IV Jagiellon to the Polish throne. The strengthening of Moscow. Lithuanian-Russian Sejms and the factors that

led to their establishment. The Privileges of 1447 and 1457. Casimir IV Jagiellon's Legal Code of 1468. A general characterization of Casimir's rule.

Chapter 14

Alexander Jagiellon. Relations with Moscow. The election of Alexander Jagiellon to the Lithuanian throne and the 1501 Union of Mielnik. The 1503 peace treaty with Moscow. The aftermath of Alexander Jagiellon's rule and the factors leading to the weakening of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Chapter 15

Sigismund I. Michael Glinski and the attempt of Western Rus' to separate from Lithuania. The reasons for the attempt's failure. War against Moscow. Sigismund's clash with the szlachta. The clash between the lesser szlachta and the magnates. The Lithuanian Statute.

Chapter 16

Sigismund II Augustus. Domestic conditions within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania under Sigismund II Augustus. The state of affairs in Livonia. The addition of Livonia to Lithuania and its aftermath.

Chapter 17

Changes to the internal organization of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the 16th century. The annulment of the nobility's inherited rights to land ownership. The Lithuanian Council of Lords. The Lithuanian Cabinet. "Feeding." Regional government administration and its characteristics. The Lithuanian szlachta. The granting to the szlachta of rights equal to those of the highest social classes.

Chapter 18

Peasants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and their rights to land ownership. Various subdivisions of the Lithuanian peasantry. State agriculture. Various forms of peasant land ownership. Taxation of the peasantry. The origins and development of serfdom.

Chapter 19
Cities and the reasons for their decline during the 15th century. Measures taken to counter the merging of cities and Magdeburg rights. The impact of Magdeburg rights on inter-class relations within Lithuania.

Chapter 20
The regional judicial system. The authority of the regional judiciary. The organization of the courts and public participation in the judicial system. Court officials. The community courts: communal court and assembly court. The decline of the community courts and the rise of the votchina court. State and city courts. Changes to the structure of the judiciary to better serve the interests of the szlachta and the judicial reforms of 1564–1565. The Jewish court. A general characterization of the judicial system of the Grand Duchy prior to the 16th century.

Chapter 21
The Catholic Church in Lithuania during the 15th and 16th centuries. The higher levels of clergy. Cathedral chapters and the lower levels of clergy. The internal status of the Catholic Church and the reasons for its decline. The status of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The separation of the Lithuanian Orthodox Church from the Moscow Metropolitanate. Patronage and its contribution to the decline of the Church. Attempts to revitalize the Lithuanian Orthodox Church.

Chapter 22
A general characterization of the social and government structure of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by the middle of the 16th century. The lack of

barriers between the social classes. The gradual separation of the szlachta from the other social classes and the reasons for this phenomenon. The establishment of serfdom. The status of cities and the reasons for their decline. The federative nature of Lithuanian government and its impact on Lithuania's development.

Chapter 23

The spread of Protestantism in Lithuania. The reasons for its rapid success. The influence of the Protestant Reformation on the 1569 Union of Lublin. The preparation of the Union and the Warsaw recess. The external status of the Grand Duchy leading up to 1569. Polish-Lithuanian relations during the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. The various regions of the Grand Duchy and their views on a Polish-Lithuanian union.

Chapter 24

The Lublin Sejm of 1569. Disagreement between the Lithuanians and the Poles. The departure of the Lithuanian delegates and the response of the Polish king. The terms of the Union of Lublin. The Union's aftermath.

Selected Chronology of Significant Events in Lithuanian History to 1569

MAP 1: The Tribes of Lithuania and their neighbors around the time of the 9th century

MAP 2: The Expansion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania From the Beginning of the 13th Century to the First Half of the 15th Century

MAP 3: Territorial Losses of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania From the End of the 15th Century to the Second Half of the 16th Century

Appendix I
The Public and Legal Status of Jews in Lithuania Prior to the Union of Lublin

The ancestry of Lithuanian Jews and their settlement in Lithuania. The status of Jews under Vytautas the Great. The strengthening of the Jewish community under Casimir IV. The Jewish exile under Alexander Jagiellon and its causes. The return of the Jews to Lithuania. The status of Jews under Sigismund I and Sigismund II Augustus. Jewish community organization at the time of the Union of Lublin. Hostilities between the szlachta and the Jews. Later development and strengthening of Jewish community organization based on religious foundations.

Appendix II
The Sejms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and their Origins

The concept of public participation in government and its development. The organization and authority of the oblast sejms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The factors contributing to the rise of the General Sejm. The organization of the General Sejm. The limitations of the military sejms. The rule of the sejms. The sejm reform of 1565 and powiat sejms (sejmiks). The judicial function of the General Sejm. The legislative authority of the General Sejm. The assembly of the General Sejm. The preparation of resolutions by the General Sejm and "liberum veto." General remarks.

Appendix III
The Privileges of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

The first written laws of Lithuania and their sources. State, oblast, and local privileges. Privileges of various social classes and individual privileges.

Appendix IV
The Lithuanian Statute

The development of the Statute. The Lithuanian Statute of 1529 and its contents. The revision of the Statute. The publication of the Statutes of 1566 and 1588. The replacement of the Statute by the laws of Russia.

Sources Consulted

Two Caricatures Drawn by the Author

Introduction

WHAT WOULD YOU DO if incredibly hard-earned success were suddenly about to be snatched away from you, after years of tireless effort on your part (and even longer on the part of your parents and those who had come before them), coupled with a real threat to your continued well-being? Would you try to hang on and adapt to this new environment as best you could—or would you cut your losses and run, with the idea of reestablishing yourself in a different country? That was the question faced by my maternal grandfather, Josef A. Katzel (1890-1930), at the time of the October 1917 Russian Revolution. To say that Iosif Alexandrovich and his family had heavily invested in and were closely tied to the system that represented Imperial Russia would be an understatement.

Based on his exemplary academic and overall record at Minsk Classical Gymnasium,[1] Katzel was accepted to the Department of Economics at the prestigious St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute (SPbPI) beginning in the fall semester 1909. SPbPI had been founded in 1899, with Prince Andrei Grigoryevich Gagarin (1855–1921) as its first director. The most advanced engineering school in Russia, loosely modeled on the French École Polytechnique, it was envisioned as an important step toward Russia's industrialization. Economics and humanities constituted one of the Institute's three divisions, intended to propagate the kind of cutting-edge knowledge that would make Russia fully competitive in the new industrial era.

Specializing in political economy, Katzel graduated with high marks in December 1916. The certificate of graduation qualified him to enter the civil service with the rank of district secretary,[2] entitling him to style himself with the form of address, "Your Well-

Bornness" (Ваше Благородие). At the time, the entire Institute was subordinated to the Ministry of Trade and Industry, with its students and faculty wearing the ministry's uniform.

Iosif Alexandrovich's father, Alexander Iosifovitch Katzel, was a bank executive who had completed a law degree from Kazan Imperial University in 1888. While there, he had served as tutor to a teenage Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov—later to become known by his alias, Lenin—before the latter's expulsion in 1887 for engaging in protests following the execution of his older brother for conspiring to assassinate Alexander III.[3] The elder Katzel's path once again crossed with that of his former student Lenin when Alexander Iosifovich lived at 37 Nikolayevskaya (now called Marat) Street in St. Petersburg, to which the editorial offices of *Pravda* had relocated in May 1912. The building was about a half an hour's walk from where his son resided, at 5/20 Starorusskaya Street, while attending SPbPI. (Ironically, the elder Katzel had been placed under police surveillance for several years, beginning with his term of study at Kazan in 1886, for suspicion of involvement with revolutionary activities, though no evidence was apparently ever identified and the surveillance eventually stopped.[4])

In 1914, Katzel married Rose Esther Fine (whom he had met at a charity event for victims of a flood, to which St. Petersburg is prone because of its very low-lying position just several feet above sea level).[5] Katzel had not only been obliged to obtain permission to marry from the director of the Institute—as part of the petition, he was required to submit a notarized "Declaration of No Objections to Marriage" from his father, documents still kept on file in his dossier at what is now called Peter the Great St. Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU).

His wife was the daughter of a Lithuanian-based paper company owner, Josef Leib Fine, whose customers included the

tsarist government, which regularly purchased from him the paper on which Russian ruble notes were printed. For this, he received annual silver service medals with the likeness of the tsar in bas-relief set in a red-and-white ribbon pin. The medals were delivered in a small pocket-style envelope with the printed message, "For diligence: to be worn on the chest—a ribbon of the Order of Saint Stanislaus." This medal was awarded to civilians who had status in the Russian table of ranks, for exemplary service to Imperial Russia.

The family's ties with the system that represented tsarist Russia were clearly so strong that they could not easily be downplayed, much less concealed. Even worse for Katzel's prospects of faring well under the new Bolshevik regime that claimed power in the October 1917 Revolution was the fact that he was on record during the preceding eight months for his strong support of the Russian Provisional Government—first led by Prince Georgy Lvov (1861–1925) and then by Alexander Kerensky (1881–1970)—which had been established immediately following the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II (1868–1918, r. 1894–1917) in March 1917. Katzel had been a freelance contributor to the liberal Russian newspaper *Rech* ("Speech"—Рѣчь, in the old orthography that was in use at the time) that had functioned as the central organ of the Constitutional Democratic Party, as well as to satirical humor publications of the day, to which he had contributed political cartoons.

All of this background was probably going through Katzel's mind as he contemplated the decision as to whether to remain in Russia or leave while it would still be feasible to do so. After what had to have been a difficult deliberation, he decided to relocate with his wife and young daughter to neighboring Lithuania. The losses he would experience by leaving the country would be great indeed but the risks he would probably face by staying on would be even greater. There were several likely reasons for the move to Kaunas, the country's second-largest city after Vilnius and an important

economic, academic and cultural center. The Katzels had family in Kaunas, including Rose's parents and siblings. Lithuania was home to a large Russian-speaking population, which Katzel could leverage to his advantage in reestablishing himself in that new location. Perhaps he saw neighboring Lithuania as a relatively safe vantage point from which he could observe events in Russia, facilitating return in the event that the newly established authoritarian regime there collapsed. There was reason to be hopeful that Lithuania would diverge from Russia, in adopting a form of government more consistent with Katzel's liberal-democratic humanist orientation. In theory, Katzel's proficiency in other languages (including English, French and German) made relocation to other countries feasible. As a practical matter, in part for the reasons mentioned above, there was really no better choice than Lithuania.

Though it's not possible to know the exact thinking that went into the decision to move to Lithuania, the ambitious plans that Katzel implemented to reestablish himself there are a matter of record. In Kaunas, he cofounded a Russian-language "gymnasium" (university preparatory academy), reflected in the two drawings at the end of this book. Obtaining the exclusive franchise for Lithuania from the American Parker Pen Company, he opened a stationery store. He wrote a three-part history of Lithuania in Russian, for publication in two volumes, after which he founded a Russian-language academic journal, *The Economic Life of Lithuania* (Экономическая жизнь Литвы), for which he served as editor. Apart from his familial duties as a devoted husband and father of two—with his second daughter (my mother, Irene) born in Kaunas —in his spare time, so to speak, he devoted himself to learning Lithuanian.

This was clearly the profile of someone who intended to put down roots in his newly adopted country. Reminiscent of John Lennon's astute observation that "life is what happens when you've

made other plans," however, the Katzel family's life was once again disrupted, on the same scale that it had been by the Russian Revolution. If ever there were a case of someone having been "overtaken by events," this would certainly qualify. The author and his family were ordinary people whose lives were overtaken by extraordinary events and the actions of historically significant individuals whose paths they crossed.

In the preface that follows this introduction and one footnote at a later point (note 21 in the second chapter), the author made it clear that his three-part, two-volume work on the history of Lithuania had—by August 1921—been completed. Why, then, was only the first volume actually published? This was the main question about which I wondered out loud, as it were, in my correspondence with a tremendously helpful librarian in the Services Department of the Information Supply Unit at the Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania in Vilnius, Zina Daugėlaitė. Ms. Daugėlaitė had confirmed with me that the library's collection included the first volume of the book but told me that there is no record of the second volume. In response to my musings as to the reason why (given that the second volume had apparently been written, this seemed curious to me), she referred me to a review of volume one, written by a well-known and influential individual named Augustinas Voldemaras (1883–1942) in the September–October 1921 issue of the Lithuanian-language journal *EDUCATIONAL WORK (ŠVIETMO DARBAS)*.[6]

The wonders of modern technology enabled me to first convert the characters in the page images to text-document form, which I could then copy and paste into the box at translate.google.com for an instant translation (I later had a careful translation done by a professional translator). As soon as I read the rough translation, the

dots immediately connected themselves and I understood what had happened.

Voldemaras was a Lithuanian nationalist political figure who had briefly served in 1918 as the country's first prime minister and continued serving in the capacity of minister of foreign affairs until mid-1920, at which point he resigned, to return (temporarily) to academia. Voldemaras had a kind of mutual admiration society going with another—better known—authoritarian figure, Adolf Hitler. Hitler actively used his influence to aid the "firebrand of the Baltic," as Voldemaras was known.[7] Voldemaras would soon return to politics, eventually carrying out a successful coup d'état, after which he became dictator for approximately three years, from 1926 to 1929. When in power as dictator, he expelled Katzel and his family from Lithuania, under the pretext that they had been discovered to be Russian spies (more about that a bit later). In August 1921, Voldemaras was out of power politically but still important and influential enough for his fierce disapproval of a book to give pause to the decision to publish any subsequent volume. In all likelihood, it was the author himself who came to the conclusion that under the circumstances, the most prudent course of action would be to voluntarily refrain from publishing the second volume.

Voldemaras's review, in four pages of tightly packed text, is a rambling and scathing condemnation as full of falsehoods as it is bursting with rage. Voldemaras implied, inaccurately, that author's entire preface was lifted from the first two lectures of Vasily Osipovich Klyuchevsky's (1841–1911) famous 1910 *Course in Russian History*.[8] He claimed, incorrectly, that a popular (non-academic) history book cannot legitimately be based on secondary sources. He accused the author, baselessly, of including certain books in various languages in his reference list for no other reason than to show off

his foreign language skills. But his main criticism of the book, which he articulates near the beginning of the review and returns to later, is that there is simply no need for it, because it is neither as scholarly nor as comprehensive as Matvey Kuzmich Lyubavsky's (1860–1936)[9] well-known *Review of the Lithuanian-Russian State* (1915).

Although the two books certainly overlap in subject matter, they are in fact quite different—in terms of content, purpose and approach. Lyubavsky's book, covering the historical period to 1569, is more than 400 pages, with a 36-page appendix in Latin.[10] Highly academic in tone, it contains no visual aids of any kind (maps, charts or tables). Katzel's two-volume set covered Lithuanian history to the present (1921), with the first volume that extended to 1569 a concise 138 pages. That volume included three maps, meticulously drawn by the author, illustrating changes in Lithuania's borders over time. It also included a chart of the grand dukes of Lithuania to 1569, a Gediminas Dynasty family tree and a selected chronology of significant events in Lithuanian history to 1569. Written in a relatively conversational and lively tone, the author sought, as stated in the preface, "to present the political history of Lithuania in a clear and concise manner, not burdening the reader with trivial details, while still adequately covering its major points." In other words, he wanted to offer non-academic Russian-speaking readers a highly *accessible*—and, yes, simplified— account of Lithuanian history to the present day. He disclosed in the second paragraph that his book "does not claim originality (as this work is primarily a compilation)."

Lyubavsky's book is to a large extent a historical commentary on the main state laws of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, contained in its general land and regional charters ("privileges"). Furthermore, as the Lithuanian historian Juozas Jakštas has written, "Lyubavsky's

... research was focused on the Russian areas of the Lithuanian state and for this reason, *he was more a historian of Western Russia than of Lithuania. The Lithuanian nation in his so-called Lithuanian-Russian state was of limited importance to him*"[11] (emphasis added). Katzel's book, in contrast, focuses exclusively on Lithuania and includes a variety of content not contained in the Lyubavsky book. It becomes very apparent, then, that the logic used by Voldemaras in condemning the book was specious. Personality flaws notwithstanding, Voldemaras was undeniably a highly educated and intelligent person, so he had to have known that these accusations were red herrings and that he was being disingenuous. Yet the fact remains that the appearance of this book obviously struck a nerve for him. He was angry, viscerally so. The question is why?

The story surrounding this book would be incomplete without acknowledging the role of the author's ethnic identity, as a Jew, in the context of his time. It is well known that Jews in tsarist Russia faced special challenges. These included pogroms and various forms of legalized discrimination such as quotas on admission to schools at different levels, as must have been the case for Josef Katzel and his father. Their experience represented a small but growing segment of the Jewish population that managed against the odds to obtain higher education and live outside the Pale of Settlement, a western region of the Russian Empire with varying borders that existed from 1791 to 1917 in which permanent residency by Jews was allowed and beyond which Jewish residency—permanent or temporary—was for the most part forbidden.[12]

The irony of the pretext under which Katzel and his family were baselessly deported from Lithuania is that as they were being expelled for non-existent espionage, the real Russian spies who were observing his movements in Lithuania were taking notes and

sending back their intelligence to Moscow. Just as the tsarist secret police had followed his father, so the Soviet secret police considered Katzel important enough to keep tabs on him while abroad—first in Lithuania and later in Germany—describing him in their notes as "a public figure and community activist." They literally followed him to his grave, noting his time of death in Berlin and the cemetery in which his remains were interred.[13]

Iron Wolf (*Geležinis Vilkas*, in Lithuanian), led by Voldemaras, was a semi-official Lithuanian paramilitary organization established in late 1927. Inspired by the Italian fascist organization known as the Blackshirts, its more than 4,000 members were known to have frequently collaborated with the Nazis during the German occupation of Lithuania from June 1941 to January 1945. A reconstituted Iron Wolf, briefly reestablished in 1941, openly supported the pro-Nazi Lithuanian Nationalists Party. Beginning in the late 1920s, Iron Wolf members were known to have vandalized Jewish shops in Kaunas. They harassed and beat Jews in the streets of Kaunas and elsewhere. A 1929 manifesto of the group stated that, "The wolves must not forget the struggle for the release of Lithuanians from their economic slavery under the Jews." The manifesto called for an end to "exploitation by the Jews," describing a future "universal boycott of all Jewish products," under the banner of "Lithuania for the Lithuanians."[14][15]

Though Voldemaras made some artful and pro forma attempts while under international scrutiny to distance himself publicly from lawless antisemitic acts on the part of his organization's rank and file, his true sentiments and complicity seem obvious. This appears to offer the best explanation for his blistering condemnation of Katzel's book, followed by his banishing the family from Lithuania after he came to power in the December 1926 coup d'état.[16] Clearly, it wouldn't sit well with someone like

Voldemaras to have Lithuanian history interpreted by a Jew, any more than Hitler would have appreciated a history of Germany written by a Jew.

Having been ordered to leave Lithuania, Katzel crossed through Poland with his wife and two young daughters to Germany. Ever resilient and as infinitely resourceful as he was immensely talented, he promptly reestablished himself in Berlin, opening a British-style men's haberdashery that he named Krawatten-Joe (Necktie Joe) at Berlin-Charlottenburg, Passauer Strasse 1, just across from the legendary KaDeWe department store, in the bustling city center. Although the business thrived, he soon met with an adversary that no amount of effort or resourcefulness could overcome: kidney disease, at a time when there was no effective treatment for it anywhere. In an inscription on a portrait photo he had made for his wife two years before he succumbed in the Urban Hospital in Berlin, he wrote:

> Who is to say that
> Life is over,
> That all that is wonderful
> Has been left behind?
> I will not quit fighting
> As long as my eyes are open
> And a fire still burns
> Inside my wounded chest.[17]

When COVID-19 put life on hold in so many ways, this centennial edition translation presented itself as a perfect "pandemic project," a constructive way to take advantage of the downtime created by the epidemic. Remembering that the original book had been published in August 1921, I figured that I would

have just enough time to complete the book for publication on its hundredth anniversary.

As the project gradually moved forward and I thought about the challenging conditions under which my grandfather wrote the book, I couldn't help but be impressed by certain parallels between his time and mine. The first and most obvious was the existence of a global pandemic. Data about the effects of the so-called Spanish influenza[18] pandemic specifically in Lithuania are virtually impossible to come by but a 2017 *Medical Science Monitor* article suggests that hundreds of thousands in the area of Poland and Lithuania died as a result of the pandemic during the years from 1918 to 1920.[19]

A second parallel that impressed me as I worked on the centennial edition was balance-of-power changes and the great influence that those changes can have, both regionally and internationally. As my grandfather wrote his book, the dissolution of empires in Russia and Europe naturally resulted in tremendous instability in all realms of existence (as implied in his preface). A century later, the change from a firmly bipolar to a shifting multipolar world—politically, militarily and economically—has similarly created a host of challenges flowing from instability and uncertainty.

The third parallel, the one that has fascinated and disturbed me the most, is one that relates to authoritarian political figures. By this, I mean that I have found the similarities between Voldemaras and Donald J. Trump to be truly striking. Each in his own way was or is impressive (Voldemaras intellectually, Trump physically) and charismatic. Both may be considered right-wing authoritarians who used the banner of populism as a cover for fascist and bigoted behavior. Voldemaras exhibited his worst fascist tendencies through Iron Wolf, discussed above. Trump has done this through

his association with the so-called Proud Boys and other racist, xenophobic "white nationalist" figures such as David Duke, the former wizard of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), an open and enthusiastic supporter of Trump during both the 2016 and 2020 presidential campaigns. While Voldemaras successfully engineered the 1926 coup that returned him to power, Trump failed in his attempt to overturn the will of US voters in the 2020 election—though he came dangerously close to preventing the peaceful transfer of power in 2021, as the facts surrounding the notorious January 6 insurrection attest.[20]

To say that there are parallels is not to suggest that circumstances, overall, between Lithuania in 1921 and the United States in 2021 are the same or even highly similar. It is only appropriate for me to fully acknowledge the infinitely greater difficulties with which the author of the original book was obliged to cope. Living through a revolution, a world war, a dictatorship and the rise of Nazism—uprooting oneself by fleeing to another country, without the numerous benefits of modern life that I enjoy in the contemporary United States—constitute a level of challenge that give me tremendous appreciation for the achievements of everyone who grappled with that situation.

Just because something was written exactly one hundred years ago does not necessarily make it of reference value a century later, of course, even if there are parallels between the two eras. What, then, makes this book worthy of a translated centennial edition—especially given the fact that it is mainly a compilation based on secondary sources?

In my opinion, there are three main reasons. The first reason is the book's value as what might be termed a *historical artifact*. In other words, the context in which it was produced—and the response it elicited—gives it meaning and significance, regardless of

the originality or complete accuracy of its content through the lens of contemporary scholarship. The understanding of Lithuanian history to 1569 expressed in the book represents a kind of snapshot in time, of the best understanding of events on the part of an educated person with access to whatever sources were feasible to access at the time.

It is also of value in a way that was completely unintended: as a book about the history of a country—filled with admiration for and well-intentioned interest in the subject of the study—that nonetheless so enraged an authoritarian political figure that he would lash out viciously at the author and, when the opportunity presented itself, expel the author and his family from the country. This, in spite of the fact that it was almost certainly the author, who in deference to the politician's offended sensibilities, refrained from publishing the second volume.

To write history is in effect to exercise a form of ownership over it. To write history is also, to a certain extent, to exercise control over the future—or, at least, a certain level of control over the direction of future discussions. In a sense, then, this is a case study in the power of the written word and the potent repercussions that its exercise can generate. At a time of heightened assault on both truth and freedom of speech worldwide—with authoritarianism steadily on the rise—these themes remain as timely as ever.

A second reason this book seems to me to be of reference value a century after it was written is its example as an early case of what might be called academic entrepreneurship. The author combined and leveraged his talents in a variety of spheres (market analysis, research, interviewing, cartography[21] and writing) to produce something that crossed the boundary from simple publication to a work of entrepreneurship. Through the propagation of knowledge,

he aspired to create additional opportunities for himself to contribute—positively and constructively—to society.

The third and final reason I will mention for the book's reference value is its pioneering orientation in the history of publishing as a serious attempt to popularize for the masses of potentially interested readers subject matter that was until then largely inaccessible to them. What the author was trying to accomplish, as suggested in his preface, was to encourage ordinary —non-academic—Russian-speaking inhabitants of Lithuania to take an interest in and learn about Lithuanian history. He sought to do this by means of a simplified alternative to books like Lyubavsky's (discussed above), by focusing on Lithuania and presenting the material in a way that was reader-friendly, with short chapters (containing summary headings at the top), lively writing with explanatory notes at the bottom of the pages and accompanying visuals in the form of charts and maps that he had drawn himself. This approach is surprisingly modern, in that it anticipated the "Made Simple"—and, more recently, the so-called "Dummies" and "Idiots"—series that followed decades later, designed to render what might otherwise be difficult and abstruse subject matter easily accessible to a general audience.

Based on the sources that the translator and I consulted, the majority of the author's text seems consistent with current scholarship. In places where we found this not to be the case (in Chapters 2 and 4, for example, where no corroborating documentation could be located on what the author has written about the ancient temple of Romuva), we have for the most part allowed the author's original words to stand as is, with an acknowledgement of any discrepancy with current sources in a note. This decision was based on consideration of the book as a historical artifact, as explained above. A small number of

corrections—of minor factual errors—have been made based on editorial scrutiny, with the benefit of tools available 100 years later.

In my role as editor, I made a number of other relatively minor changes that seemed appropriate. Because only the first volume was actually published, with the remainder of the manuscript lost, I took the liberty of retitling this volume the way I think the author would have if he knew that it was going to be the only part to be published. Thus, *A History of Lithuania* (with a long subtitle describing the appendices, tables and maps) became *A Short History of Lithuania to 1569*, to accurately reflect the published book's limited content. For purposes of human interest, a portrait of the author has been included, as have the two caricatures reproduced at the end of the book. In addition to that, I moved the list of references consulted from the end of the preface to the end of the book, to be more in keeping with current practice. Similarly, in consideration for the preferences of present-day readers, very large paragraphs have been broken up into smaller ones.

Difficulties of rendering into English two tables ("The Grand Dukes of Lithuania" and "The Gediminas Dynasty Family Tree") that appeared in the original volume have prompted their omission from this translated centennial edition. Because the digital format escapes the limitations imposed by paper, I have included here illustrations at the beginning of each chapter, as I believe the author would have if he were publishing electronically. I have taken as many of these as possible from the sources in the reference list, for which copyright has long expired.

Finally, to distinguish between the author's original footnotes and new ones that were added to provide the clarification to which we felt readers are entitled, the following system was adopted: The author's original notes are preceded by the word Note, followed by a colon. Footnotes that were added for this edition do not have "Note:" in front of them. When additional verbiage was added to

one of the author's original notes, parentheses were used for the new material, making it possible to distinguish between the original and what has been added.

Working on this centennial edition has been a grand adventure that has taken me, virtually, to different parts of the world. It has given me the opportunity to learn about the culture and history of a great European state—the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—that at its apex, in the 15th century, was the largest in Europe, encompassing what is now Belarus in addition to parts of Latvia, Moldova, Poland, Russia and Ukraine. It has also given me the opportunity to interact with many knowledgeable and intellectually curious people of goodwill who have generously shared their knowledge and provided invaluable assistance. Without that support, this project could never have been completed.

As mentioned above, Zina Daugėlaitė—with the Services Department of the Information Supply Unit at the Martynas Mazvydas National Library of Lithuania in Vilnius—provided a critical "missing link" by informing me of the review article by Augustinas Voldemaras. Special thanks are also due to SPbPU Media Center Director Raisa Bestugina, who interfaced with the alumni office and university authorities there to provide me with images and some translations of the treasure trove of archival material in my grandfather's remarkably complete dossier. I am likewise indebted to researcher-in-residence at Kazan Federal University (formerly Kazan Imperial University) Artyom Kazakov, who disclosed information in the dossiers to which he had access, revealing secret police records relating to my grandfather and great grandfather, including the connection with Lenin. Community members at various subforums on Reddit (subreddits, as they are called), whose names I do not know, were extremely helpful in responding with information to queries I posted (for example,

about the effects of the Spanish Influenza pandemic of 1918-1920 in Lithuania).

Several scholars have been especially helpful and generous in providing me with language and subject matter guidance. These include Timothy Snyder (Levin Professor of History at Yale) and Mindaugas Šapoka, researcher at the Lithuanian Institute of History in Vilnius and author of *Warfare, Loyalty, and Rebellion: The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Great Northern War, 1709–1717* (Routledge, 2017). Their contributions are detailed in footnote 11 in Chapter 17. Prof. Snyder also kindly referred me to Daniel Stone, professor emeritus, history, The University of Winnipeg, and author of *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795* (University of Washington Press, 2001), who generously provided me with guidance relating to the status of Jews in Imperial Russia.

Speaking of Reddit, I am very fortunate to have met on that platform two individuals, Dennis Howard[22] and Roman Sotnikov, whose contributions have been critical for completion of this project. Dennis was more than just a superb translator of the original Russian-language text. He also served as an invaluable collaborator, helping me resolve various issues relating to content and presentation. When Dennis's schedule did not allow for assistance with SPbPU records and family documents in my possession, I benefitted immensely from help on the part of Roman, whose extensive knowledge and multi-lingual abilities never cease to amaze me.

In terms of family, I am grateful to my grandmother, Rose Fine Katzel, for preserving the original Russian-language copy of the book with which I worked and subsequently to my father, Louis A. Berman, for preserving it after her passing. I am also grateful to my grandmother for all the stories and family lore she passed along to me about her husband, my grandfather, whom I never had the

opportunity to know directly. I am thankful to my sister, Jennifer K. Berman, for devoting hours in search of the author artwork that enlivens this edition. Tremendous appreciation is due to my wife, Anny (Yen Yen), who good-naturedly allowed me to indulge in this project for a year, at the expense of numerous other activities. Finally, it is only appropriate that I express gratitude toward my grandfather, for the priceless opportunity that this project represented for me—to get to know him better, while at the same time learning so much about the fascinating history of Lithuania and surrounding areas, meeting and interacting with so many wonderful people in the process.

Daniel K. Berman, PhD[23]

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1 The term for a school in central Europe, Germany, Russia, or Scandinavia that prepares students for university entrance.

2 In Russian, *gubernsky sekretar* (губернский секретар), the 12th civil service (governmental) rank in Imperial Russia.

3 Alexander III (1845–1894) was emperor of Russia, king of Poland and grand duke of Finland, from March 1881 until his death in 1894. Known as highly reactionary, he reversed some of the liberal reforms of his father, Alexander II (1818–1881, r. 1855–1881).

4 A researcher in residence at Kazan Federal University (formerly Kazan Imperial University), Artyom Kazakov (Артём Казаков), described reading this in the elder Katzel's dossier, still on file at the university (email correspondence dated 28 May 2018).

5 As of this writing, the saint-petersburg.com website reports that the city has experienced more than 270 major floods since it was founded in 1703.

6 https://www.epaveldas.lt/object/recordDescription/LNB/LNB013528B9

7 *Time*, 26 December 1938 (http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,772189,00.html).

8 Aside from the quote at the top that is clearly attributed to Klyuchevsky, the first sentence of the preface contains verbiage that overlaps with verbiage in

the first sentence of the tenth paragraph in the first lecture of Klyuchevky's *Course in Russian History* (which seems to be the full extent of the overlap).

9 Lyubavsky's supervisor at Moscow University was V.O. Klyuchevsky.

10 The appendix contains the various "privileges" (rights—aka entitlements, decrees or general land and regional charters—covered in some detail in the text of this volume, especially in Chapter 13 and Appendix III) issued to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

11 "RUSSIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY ON THE ORIGIN OF THE LITHUANIAN STATE: Some Critical Remarks on V. T. Pashuto's Study," in *LITUANUS: Lithuanian Quarterly Journal of Arts and Sciences* (vol. 11, no. 4), Winter 1965 (http://www.lituanus.org/1965/65_4_02_Jakstas.html).

12 According to Daniel Stone, professor emeritus, history, The University of Winnipeg, and author of *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386-1795* (University of Washington Press 2001), the legal Jewish population of St. Petersburg in 1914 was 35,000 (email correspondence dated 29 June 2021).

13 From archival material shared with me by Mr. Kazakov (see note 4 above) of secret police records, reporting expulsion from Lithuania by Voldemaras.

14 Gediminas Rudis, "Iron Wolf" (Geležinis Vilkas), *Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia* (*Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija*), 24 September 2018 (https://www.vle.lt/straipsnis/gelezinis-vilkas/).

15 Gediminas Rudis, "Anti-Semitic Trends During the Voldemarin Movement from 1928–1940," International Commission for an Assessment of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania, 31 May 2006 (https://web.archive.org/web/20070311062152/http://www.komisija.lt/lt/naujiena.php?id=37).

16 Source: Artyom Kazakov (email correspondence dated 28 May 2018).

17 Кто говорит, что / Жизнь уже прожита, / Что всё прекрасное / Осталось позади? / Я боя не сдаю / Пока глаза открыты / И есть ещё огонь / Въ израненной груди (translated from the Russian by Dennis Howard).

18 Apparently in Lithuania at the time, the disease was sometimes referred to as "sheep cough" (see https://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/mokslas-ir-it/11/1154970/kaip-stabdytas-baisusis-ispaniskasis-gripas-istorijos-pamokos-rodo-kad-itin-svarbu-priemoniu-nenutraukti-per-anksti).

19 Marek L. Grabowski, Bożena Kosińska, Józef P. Knap and Lidia B. Brydak. "The Lethal Spanish Influenza Pandemic in Poland," in *Medical Science Monitor* (vol. 23), published online 12 October 2017 (doi: 10.12659/MSM.906280, https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5649514/).

20 See for example Stephen Collinson, "Trump's $100 million threat to democracy," 2 August 2021, CNN.com (https://www.cnn.com/2021/08/02/politics/donald-trump-doj-republicans-insurrection-january-6/index.html): "It is now clear that first in Georgia, and then by trying to wield presidential power to force the Justice Department to declare the election soiled by fraud where none existed, the ex-President sought to incite a coup to stay in office. When that failed, he called a mob to Washington, incited it with false claims of voter fraud, and then it invaded Congress, obliterating a peaceful transfer of power."

21 It is testimony to the author's talent that the best cartographer I could find to render the maps into English, with all the high-tech tools at his disposal, could not match the author's original artistry, working entirely by hand, a century ago. A digital version of the original Russian-language edition is being uploaded to the same platforms as this translation, under the title История Литвы (Istoríya Litvy).

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Preface

"Any truly conscientious citizen needs to be at least a little bit of a historian."

—Professor V. Klyuchevsky

The goal of every local history is to study the diverse and dynamic, successful and unsuccessful combination of external and internal conditions for development that pertain to a particular nation or people. Through this study, the structure of human social behavior and the nature of its constituent elements, together with the nation's degree of participation in the overall cultural movement of humanity are examined. As such, every local history, including the history of Lithuania, is of both local and general interest. This general interest is further underscored in modern times when matters relating to Eastern Europe are at the forefront of world politics. Certainly, this is a political problem of utmost complexity that will require considerable time and effort to resolve. Since the fates of many generations to come depend on a correct resolution of this problem, it is understandable that the entire cultural world has focused its attention on the events that transpire in Eastern Europe.

Lithuania—with its legal status, borders, and international relations under scrutiny—plays an important role in the configuration of issues relating to Eastern Europe. To identify what specifically this role is, correctly evaluate the internal qualities and capabilities of Lithuania (which are rooted in its glorious history), and determine the direction the nation is headed in for the near future, it is essential to first understand its political and social history. To this end, this book—which does not claim originality (as

this work is primarily a compilation)—pursues two objectives. The first is to satisfy the rising demand for a book that covers the history of Lithuania, written in the Russian language. The second is to provide a historical context for the most relevant issues concerning modern-day Lithuania. In accordance with these objectives, this is my attempt to present the political history of Lithuania in a clear and concise manner, not burdening the reader with trivial details, while still adequately covering its major points. Additionally, since I believe that a surface-level history alone does not satisfy the demands of modern historical investigation, I have given special attention to the social organization of Lithuania and the changes that were made to its social structure as a result of various internal and external factors.

This *History of Lithuania* is conceived of as a work in three main parts (the endnotes, together with the second and third parts, will be published in a separate volume). The first part covers the period of Lithuanian history up to the Union of Lublin in 1569,[24] or in other words, up to the formal loss of its political independence and national sovereignty. The second part covers Lithuanian history under foreign rule, first under Poland (in the form of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth), and then under the Russian Empire (as the Northwestern Krai[25]). This section ends with the beginning of the World War and German military occupation. The third part covers the return of Lithuania to self-governance and its present situation.[26]

It is important to note that Lithuanian history is a field that has yet to be sufficiently investigated. Although rather scarce, materials can be found regarding Lithuanian history up to the middle of the 16th century (although most of these works each individually focus on one particular issue). Finding works that cover Lithuanian society during the 17th and 18th centuries is quite challenging,

since the research in this field is very preliminary. For me, personally, the compilation of this book was complicated by the circumstances of our times, which made travel exceedingly difficult, and made certain important historical sources located in Russia unavailable to me. Be that as it may, I tried my best to familiarize myself with as many historical sources as possible. The practical challenges of incorporating in-text references to sources have obliged me to omit these, in favor of a list of sources consulted.[27]

In conclusion, I would like to offer my sincere and heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped me collect sources and publish this book. I am especially grateful for the invaluable advice and expert guidance of Professor Eduards Volters[28] and Judge A. Janulaitis, of the Supreme Tribunal.[29] I would also like to extend my gratitude to librarian Z. Burach, who greatly facilitated my familiarization with many essential materials housed in the National Library.

Josef A. Katzel
Kaunas, August 1921

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24 The original text referred to the 1385 Union of Krewo (or Act of Krėva, also spelled Union of Krevo and Act of Kreva)—often referencing not only the particular document but the events of 1384–1386—as the First Union of Lublin, while what is now universally known as the Union of Lublin, signed in 1569, was referred to as the Second Union of Lublin. This was probably because Grand Duke of Lithuania Jogaila (c. 1352/1362–1434, later to become Władysław II Jagiełło) was in 1386 officially elected king of Poland in Lublin, Poland. In order to avoid confusion, the names of these two unions as used in this translation have been brought into compliance with current nomenclature.

25 (In Russian, Северо-Западный край) An unofficial subdivision (krai) of the Russian Empire in the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (present-day Belarus and Lithuania).

26 This translation is limited to the contents of the first volume, as described here and in the table of contents. At the time the first volume was issued, the manuscript for the second volume had apparently been completed but never actually published, for reasons described in the introduction.

27 Originally presented at the end of this preface, the list was moved to the end of the book, as explained in the introduction.

28 Prof. Eduards Volters (1856–1941) was a noted linguist, ethnographer, and archaeologist who studied Baltic languages and culture. He was a long-time faculty member at the Saint Petersburg University (1886–1918) and later at Vytautas Magnus University (1922–1934), in Kaunas. Volters established and headed the Lithuanian Central Library (1920–1922), his tenure there overlapping with the author's preparation of this book.

29 Judge Augustinas Janulaitis (1878–1950), was one of four regular members of the Supreme Tribunal of Lithuania, the highest court in interwar Lithuania, officially established in December 1918.

The First Era
Legendary—Prior to the Beginning of the 13th century

The arrival of the Roman Duke Palemon to Lithuania, with 500 of his noble companions, in a depiction of the Lithuanian origin myth, by Teofil Żychowicz (Lviv, 1852), National Library of Poland.

Chapter 1

The origins of the Lithuanian people. Their language. The tribes of Lithuania.

The origins of the Lithuanian people were unknown for a significant period of time. It was only during the second half of the

19th century when the prominent scholar August Schleicher,[30] on the basis of comparative linguistics, proved with great certainty that early Lithuanians were Indo-Europeans that—like the Celts, Greeks, Romans, Germanic peoples, and Slavs—descended from the Aryans.[31] The accomplished linguist Alexander Hilferding,[32] along with many of his contemporaries, discovered through linguistic research that the Lithuanian language is the most closely related of all Indo-European languages to Sanskrit.[33] Furthermore, it was discovered that Lithuanian, the oldest of all Indo-European languages, contained certain Aryan qualities not found in other languages. From this finding, Hilferding concluded that Lithuanians were the first of the Indo-European people to separate from the Aryans and migrate from Asia to Europe (presuming that Asia is truly the birthplace of the Aryans).[34] Thus, Hilferding believed that the early Lithuanians arrived in Europe first, followed by the Celts, Germanic peoples, and finally the Slavs.

Following their exodus from Asia, the early Lithuanians, most likely constrained by the movement of other peoples, settled the lands that would become present-day Lithuania (i.e., those along the eastern shore of the Baltic Sea, in the vicinity of the Neman, Vistula, and Western Dvina[35] Rivers). This theory is supported by various archaeological artifacts, dating back to the Iron Age.[36]

The lands settled by the early Lithuanians—protected by impenetrable forests, deep swamps, and grand rivers—were far removed from migratory routes. It was for this reason that the Lithuanian people did not participate in the patterns of migration characteristic of the other ethnic groups of the region. However, the early Lithuanians did come into contact with the Goths and Finns, from whom they adopted a large number of words.[37] Accurate historical sources concerning early Lithuanians from before the late 10th century cannot be found. It was only beginning around this

time that the unreliable and unclear sources authored by ancient scholars (e.g., Ptolemy in the 2nd century, Jordanes in the 6th century, and Wulfstan of Hedeby in the 9th century) were replaced by detailed and accurate historical accounts. Among these were the works of the Catholic missionaries Adalbert of Prague[38] and Bruno of Querfurt,[39] along with Nestor the Chronicler.[40]

Based on a combination of these sources, it is theorized that the Lithuanian-Aryan tribes were comprised of four main ethnic branches (with the names of the subgroups indicated here in parentheses, when subgroups exist—with the name in Lithuanian, italicized, immediately following the English): (1) Prussians—*Senprusiai*, (2) Pomeranians (Lithuanians—*Aukštaitija*; and Samogitians—*Žemaitija*), (3) Latvians (Curonians—*Kuršiai*; Semigallians—*Žiemgaliai*; Latgalians—*Latgaliai*; and Wends—*Vendai*), and (4) Yotvingians—*Jotvingiai*. Eleven Prussian tribes settled the lands along the coast from the Lower Vistula River to the Lower Neman River. The peoples of Lithuania proper settled the regions of the Middle Neman River and the Neris River tributary. The Samogitians settled the regions of the Lower Neman River and the Dubysa and Nevėžis River tributaries. The Curonians settled the lands enclosed by the Baltic sea and the Gulf of Riga. Near the Western Dvina River, the Semigallians settled along the left bank, while the Latgalians settled along the right. The Wends settled along the coast of the Baltic Sea from present-day Memel[41] to Vindava.[42] The Yotvingians settled the lands between the Upper Neman River and the Western Bug River in the Narew and Biebrza River basins. Completely separate from the others, the Galindians (whose name is thought to derive from the Baltic word *galas*, meaning "the end") settled in close proximity to the Oka and Protva Rivers. They quickly dissolved into the surrounding Slavic tribes without a trace, however.[43]

30 August Schleicher (1821–1868) was a German linguist whose major work is considered to be *A Compendium of the Comparative Grammar of the Indo-European Languages*, in which he attempted to reconstruct the Proto-Indo-European language.

31 Employment of this term here follows its original use as a self-designation by Indo-Iranian peoples in ancient times, in contrast with "non-Indo-Aryan'' or "non-Iranian" peoples, involving a concept that is religious, cultural, and linguistic—rather than racial—in nature. Subsequent coopting of this term for purposes of advancing the Nazi racial ideology, together with the atrocities committed in its name, has led academics in most cases to use the term "Indo-Iranian" in place of the term "Aryan," with only the South Asian branch still containing a vestige of the earlier nomenclature ("Indo-Aryan").

32 (In Russian, Александр Фёдорович Гильфердинг) Alexander Hilferding (1831–1872) was an Imperial Russian linguist and folklorist of German descent who collected some 318 *bylinas* (traditional Russian oral epic poems) in the Russian North.

33 Sanskrit is a standardized dialect of Old Indo-Aryan, originating as early as 1700–1200 BCE Vedic Sanskrit. One of the oldest Indo-European languages for which substantial documentation exists, Sanskrit is believed to have been the general language of the greater Indian subcontinent in ancient times.

34 Note: Some scholars propose that the birthplace of the Indo-European people was not Asia, but Europe. Certain adherents to this theory point to the Caucasus as the birthplace of the Aryans, while others believe the area of origin to be the Middle Volga Region, Germany, the Pinsk Marshes, and so on.

35 Also known as the Daugava River.

36 A period in human history that started between 1200 B.C. and 600 B.C., depending on the region—following the Stone Age and Bronze Age—during which time people across much of Europe, Asia, and parts of Africa began making tools and weapons from iron and steel.

37 Note: For example, the word "kunigas," which originally meant "king" but now means "priest," was borrowed from the Gothic language.

38 Known in present-day Czech Republic, Poland, and Slovakia as Saint Vojtěch (c. 956–997).

39 Also known as Brun and Boniface, Bruno of Querfurt (c. 974–1009 AD) was a Christian missionary bishop and martyr, who was beheaded near the border of Kievan Rus' and Lithuania for trying to spread Christianity. Rumored to have been a relative of the Holy Roman Emperor Otto III, he is also referred to as the second Apostle of the Prussians.

40 Saint Nestor the Chronicler (c. 1056–1114) was the reputed author of the *Primary Chronicle* (the earliest East Slavic chronicle).

41 Since the publication of this book in 1921, the port city of Memel—in the former German Prussian territory of Memelland—was renamed Klaipėda (formally, in 1947).

42 Vindava (Виндава) and Vindau (Виндау) were Russian names from the time of the Russian Empire, although Ventspils (Вентспилс) has been used since World War II (in German, the city was historically known as Windau).

43 For a visual representation, please see Map 1, "The Tribes of Lithuania and Their Neighbors Around the Time of the 9th Century," toward the end of the book, following the text.

Romuva temple, at center (from de Danilowicz, 1919, p. 17).

Chapter 2

The origins of early Lithuanian religion. The natural world and mankind from the perspective of early Lithuanian religion. Mythology. Gods and goddesses. Religious cults. Romuva. The pagan priesthood. Kriwe-Kriwajto. Religious rites. Fortune-telling. Legendary heroes.

As a result of their isolation, early Lithuanians were able to preserve their civilization and religious practices for much longer than other Indo-Europeans. The long and isolated inhabitation of lands inaccessible to neighboring tribes allowed early Lithuanians

to maintain the belief system of their ancestors—the Aryans—to a far greater extent than other Indo-European people, although early Lithuanians did incorporate new beliefs that reflected their surrounding environment into their existing Aryan belief system.

Early Lithuanians believed that the world existed from the beginning of time. In every object of the physical world and each natural phenomenon, early Lithuanians saw the presence of a divine element. This meant that for early Lithuanians, the natural world was filled with different deities. The dense forests of the lands inhabited by early Lithuanians significantly influenced their religious beliefs, giving rise to many superstitions. Early Lithuanians believed that one's entire life was under the direct control of both good and evil deities, who had to be appeased through worship and sacrifice. For early Lithuanians, truth and law were synonymous: laws existed from the beginning of time and were the manifestation of natural truths—laws could not be created, only discovered. Tradition was respected as a memory of the past. Similar to the ancient Greeks, early Lithuanians believed in predetermination, or fate, which was believed to apply to both humans and gods. For this reason, sin was not seen as a consequence of an evil will, but instead was believed to be the result of a predetermined fate.

Like all Aryan peoples, early Lithuanians worshipped forces of nature, including the Sun, the Moon, stars, water, thunder, and lightning. Worship of the Sun was the most ancient religious practice of the early Lithuanians. This practice eventually gave rise to the worship of fire, which always burned before their idols. Other forces of nature were worshiped through the veneration of certain animals and reptiles, in addition to stone and wooden idols. Although certain gods were worshipped by all early Lithuanians, it is very plausible that individual Lithuanian tribes also worshipped their own particular deities.

Of the gods worshipped by all early Lithuanians, Perkūnas stands out as especially noteworthy. This god, as the personification of fire (an element of both destruction and benevolence), was the one that was for early Lithuanians both the most popular and the most respected. This was the only god whose name could be found in every single list of Lithuanian gods. One day of each week—Friday—was dedicated to him, with priests offering sacrifices to him daily. The Lithuanian high-priest *Kriwe-Kriwajto*[44] wore an image of this god on his ceremonial dress. The temple dedicated to Perkūnas was usually located in an oak grove, as the oak tree was the symbol of Perkūnas. Early Lithuanians depicted Perkūnas as a middle-aged man, with large muscles, a head crowned with a halo of fire or rays of light, and a raised hand holding a piece of flint or a hammer.

Atrimpas—the god of water, fertility, and youthful strength and courage—was depicted as a twisted serpent with a human head. A vessel filled with water and containing a live serpent was always placed before the image of Atrimpas. Fruits of the harvest, milk, wax, and incense were offered as sacrifices to him, along with children.[45]

Poklius[46] was venerated as the god of the underworld. Early Lithuanians believed that it was Poklius who inflicted diseases and death upon humans, while controlling the spirits of the dead (in Lithuanian, *vėlė*). This god was believed to manifest himself through forces unfavorable to humans: cold weather, storms, destruction, and old age. Poklius was depicted as a pale-faced elderly man with a grey beard and a head carelessly wrapped with a piece of cloth. The heads of animals and people who were killed were offered to him as sacrifices. Three skulls always lay before his image: that of a human, a horse, and a bull.

These three gods—Perkūnas, Atrimpas, and Poklius—were venerated as the three main Lithuanian gods, and their depictions

were found in Romuva.[47] It was here that beneath the branches of the holy oak, an eternal flame (lit using the piece of flint held by Perkūnas) burned before their images. Besides these three, early Lithuanians also worshipped other gods: Kovas—the god of war; Žiemininkas—the god of the harvest and household; Ragutis—the god of merriment; and Kaukas (similar to the Russian deity Domovoy)—a small, secondary deity that settled in a particular home, protecting the family there.

The most popular goddesses were: Praurimė—the goddess of the eternal flame; Laima—the goddess of newborns and mothers[48]; Lietuva—the goddess of freedom and joy; Milda—the goddess of love and courtship; Krūminė—the goddess of the harvest; and Karaluna—the goddess of light. In addition to these goddesses, early Lithuanians also worshipped seven secondary goddesses who directed the lives of humans (similar to the Roman Parcae[49]). Many large stones on riverbanks throughout the country were dedicated to these goddesses.

Like other pagan peoples, early Lithuanians worshipped animals (birds and mammals), reptiles, amphibians, and inanimate objects that were exceptionally old or impressive in terms of size. According to the accounts of Jerome of Prague,[50] at the beginning of the 15th century, Lithuanians deified a wide variety of such animals and objects, including bears, rabbits, serpents, deer, toads, and old trees (especially oaks). The place of worship was outdoors, anywhere in nature: forests, fields, meadows, and gardens. Early Lithuanians also had certain holy mountains, hills, and groves that were limited to access by pagan priests—all others were prohibited, by penalty of death, from entering.

The main temple of the early Lithuanians was Romuva. This was also the residence of the Kriwe-Kriwajto (possibly meaning "judge of judges"). Romuva was first built in Prussia at the beginning of the

11th century. After it was destroyed in 1010 by the King of Poland Bolesław I the Brave, Romuva was moved first to the mouth of the Nevėžis River, then to Kernavė, and finally to Vilnius. There it remained until 1387, that is to say, until the Christianization of Lithuania by Władysław II Jagiełło.[51]

In Lithuania, the pagan priesthood was not limited to a particular social class (as early Lithuania did not have a system based on social class). The number of pagan priests in the Lithuanian lands was, in fact, quite large. Organized into a distinct hierarchy, they had an immense influence on the early Lithuanian peoples. At the head of the hierarchy was the high-priest Kriwe-Kriwajto, who presided over the supreme court and confirmed nominations to high levels of the priesthood (the lowest positions were inherited). As previously mentioned, the highest position was that of the Kriwe-Kriwajto, the guardian of holy objects and chief judge of the land. Additionally, the Kriwe-Kriwajto served a number of important functions. He maintained and interpreted ancient customs, which were used in place of written laws. He enforced strict moral standards and sternly reprimanded those who acted contrary to these standards. He also supervised various functional categories within the priesthood (i.e., *Vaideloti*[52]—preachers and physicians; *Tilissons*[53]—undertakers; *Bruteniks*[54]—Lithuanian bards; *Shvoluns*[55]—clerics who performed wedding ceremonies). Pagan priests could be easily recognized by their distinct clothing (which included a white belt) and their staff.

The most prevalent functional category of pagan priests was that of the *Vaideloti*. Their duties were quite varied: they offered sacrifices, preached to the people, and healed the infirm. The Vaideloti wore long tunics trimmed with white lace and—along the bottom, with animal fur—white belts made of cloth (the

distinguishing feature of all pagan priests). While offering sacrifices, they wore a wreath of oak leaves.

In addition to the Vaideloti, three types of priestesses—*Vaidelotki*,[56] *Ragutini*,[57] and *Burti*[58]—comprised a separate subset of functional categories. Vaidelotki maintained the fires that burned in the temples and, under the penalty of death, were obligated to remain chaste. *Ragutini* served Ragutis, the god of merriment (similar to the way that maenads served Dionysius in ancient Greece). *Burti* were singers and sorcerers who practiced witchcraft, fortune-telling, and healing.

Each Lithuanian tribe had its own Kriwe-Kriwajto, but the Kriwe-Kriwajto that occupied Romuva had the greatest authority. Aside from leading the religious services, the Kriwe-Kriwajto also acted as the supreme judge and chief advisor in all matters concerning the Lithuanian community. Thus, the Kriwe-Kriwajto served as a unifying force that laid the foundation for inter-tribal unity. The identity of the Kriwe-Kriwajto was veiled in mystery, as he rarely appeared before the people. The symbol of his power was a staff with three bent ends. One third of all loot obtained through war was given to him. The Kriwe-Kriwajto was elected by all the pagan priests to serve for life. According to Lithuanian tradition, in his old age, the Kriwe-Kriwajto would offer himself as a sacrifice to the gods: to cleanse the sins of the people, the Kriwe-Kriwajto was ceremoniously burned alive. In part as a result of this voluntary self-sacrifice, early Lithuanians greatly revered their religious leader. The last Kriwe-Kriwajto, Gintautas, lived through the Christianization of Lithuania and destruction of Romuva, dying during the reign of Vytautas the Great[59] in 1413.

Lithuanians offered sacrifices to cleanse their consciences of sins, to appease the gods, and to express their gratitude to them. Depending on the solemnity of the situation and the wealth of the

individual, different deities were offered different sacrifices. These included horses, bulls, pigs, chickens, geese, honey, fish, and fruits of the harvest (especially the first fruits). As it was believed that the gods preferred the sacrifice of a goat, every settlement at year's end sacrificed a goat as atonement for the people's sins. Under penalty of death, non-believers and criminals were not allowed to attend sacrifices.

There are credible sources that attest to the practice of human sacrifice among early Lithuanians. It should be noted, however, that this practice was uncommon. Human sacrifices primarily occurred when massive numbers of people gathered to mark a particularly noteworthy occasion. There were two types of human sacrifice: voluntary and compulsory. Voluntary human sacrifice was viewed as a means of cleansing the conscience and primarily involved the infirm, disabled, and elderly. It was for this reason that an elderly Kriwe-Kriwajto would sacrifice himself, and that parents would offer their sick children to the god Atrimpas. Compulsory human sacrifice was applied to prisoners of war. After a successful military campaign, the high-priest would receive one third of all the captured spoils, as a sacrifice to the gods. As an expression of gratitude to the gods, high-ranking prisoners were ceremoniously burned alive.

All Lithuanian tribes believed in the immortality of the soul, with their members expecting either reward or punishment in the afterlife. Early Lithuanians believed that those who accepted their fates without complaint would be rewarded, whereas those who dared to resist their fates would be punished. The most serious punishment was believed to be the damnation of a person's soul to non-existence. In contrast, righteous individuals were believed to remain invisibly on Earth for eternity. There is reason to believe that early Lithuanians believed in reincarnation: i.e., after death, the

spirit of the individual could remain on Earth, entering into a new body.

The burial practice of cremation was popular among early Lithuanians. Along with the body of the deceased, certain possessions that were of value to and used by the deceased in daily life were placed onto the funeral pyre. It was not uncommon for a deceased's wife, and even some of his servants, to be burned in the funeral pyre together with him. This was done based on the belief that the deceased would be resurrected in the afterlife, returning to the same position in society that he held during his lifetime. Tilissons were present at every cremation, which was always performed on the third day after the person's death. After the cremation was complete, the ashes of the deceased were gathered into a vessel, which was then buried on a mound or near a roadway. Wakes were held on the 6th, 9th, and 40th days following the person's death. Lithuanians also believed in a day of judgment that would take place in the afterlife. This final judgment was to occur at the top of a large hill that the dead would have to ascend. For this reason, Lithuanians always cremated the claws of a lynx or bear along with their dead, to help the deceased climb the hill.

Because early Lithuanians saw matrimony as a religious rite, pagan priests were always in attendance, offering their prayers to the gods. Although ancient tradition upheld monogamous relationships, it was not forbidden for Lithuanians to practice polygamy (which was especially widespread among the Prussians). In the case of a polygamous marriage, the first wife advised her husband and managed the home, whereas the others were seen as slaves (since they were either taken as prisoners during war or were purchased from the poorer individuals of the tribe), performing hard labor and divided up as property.

It was common for early Lithuanians to consult the gods prior to engaging in any important activity. For example, before heading off

to battle, a human sacrifice was performed to predict the outcome of the military conflict. A pagan priest would thrust a knife into the breast or neck of the condemned prisoner and would make a determination based on the bleeding pattern as to whether the military campaign would be successful. If the blood sprayed out like a fountain, this was considered a good sign. If the blood slowly poured out from the wound, however, the conflict was expected to be unsuccessful.[60]

According to early Lithuanian folklore, there was a heroic period, during which the characters of myths and legends accomplished all that they were known for. Some demigods and heroes of early Lithuanian folklore included Vytautas, Alcis,[61] Gelon, Išmintis, the brothers Bruteno and Widewuto,[62] and Nemunas and Palemon.[63] Of all the early Lithuanian legends, the most noteworthy is that of Bruteno and his brother Widewuto. This legend is of great interest because it outlines how a particular tribe (most likely, the Normans) arrived in the lands of Lithuania, integrated with the indigenous peoples, and established the foundations for early Lithuanian civil society and religious life.[64]

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44 Not a proper name but rather the name of the position.

45 The translator and the editor were unable to find corroboration of human ("blood") sacrifice tied specifically to this deity but there is mention of such sacrifice connected with paganism in pre-Christian Lithuania.

46 This god goes by many other names, most commonly Patollo and Peckols.

47 An important temple-residence, described in some detail below. Although no corroborating documentation could be located on what the author has written in this chapter about the ancient temple of Romuva, we have allowed his words to stand as is. This decision was based on consideration of the book as a historical artifact, as explained in the introduction.

48 Also considered to be the goddess of fate.

49 In ancient Roman religion and myth, the Parcae (singular: Parca) were the female personifications of destiny who directed the lives and deaths of humans and gods.

50 Jerome of Prague (1379–1416) was a Czech scholastic philosopher, theologian, reformer, and professor.

51 At that time, Władysław II Jagiełło (c. 1352/1362–1434) held the titles of both grand duke of Lithuania and king of Poland.

52 In Russian, Вайделот (plural: Вайделоты). Here the Latvian Vaidelotis (plural: Vaideloti) is used as it is closest to the Russian word in the original text.

53 In Russian, Тилиссон (plural: Тилиссоны).

54 In Russian, Брутеник (plural: Брутеники).

55 In Russian, Швольюн (plural: Швольюны).

56 In Russian, Вайделотка (plural: Вайделотки).

57 In Russian, Рагутина (plural: Рагутины).

58 In Russian, Бурта (plural: Бурты).

59 Grand duke of Lithuania from August 4, 1392 to October 27, 1430.

60 Note: Another approach to fortune-telling involved two scenarios: If pagan priests observed an eagle, white dove, crow, crane, or bustard flying over the border into Lithuania, victory was predicted. If a wolf was encountered on the way to battle, the campaign was predicted to be unsuccessful.

61 Related to Alcaeus (the birth name of Heracles, in Greek mythology).

62 Widewuto (also known as Vaidevutis, Viduutus, Vidvutus, Waidewut, and Witowudi) was a legendary king of the pagan Prussians who was said to have ruled along with his elder brother, the high priest (Kriwe-Kriwajto) Bruteno in the 6th century AD.

63 The legend of the Palemonids, as a dynasty of grand dukes of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, originated in the 15th or 16th century as evidence that Lithuanians and the Grand Duchy were of Roman origins.

64 Note: For the legend of Bruteno and Widewuto, see the endnotes. (As described in the introduction, the second volume—which included the endnotes—was never published.)

Antique Lithuanian heads of distaffs, used for spinning yarn (from de Danilowicz, 1919, p. 19).

Chapter 3

Dwellings. Occupations and commerce. Record-keeping. Written language. Folk songs. Cities. Government authority. Princes.[65] Laws. Military campaigns.

Lithuanians lived as small communities in isolated villages. Their homes, primarily made of spruce, were characterized by simplicity and durability. The interior of the home was divided into two parts: one for humans and the other for livestock. To protect their livestock from the multitude of wild animals found in Lithuania, villagers brought their livestock into their homes each night. In the middle of the dwelling, a pit—in which a fire was maintained at all times—was dug out and lined with stones.

Since ancient times, Lithuanians always worked their lands. Because Lithuanians viewed agriculture as a sacred occupation, the blade of the *sokha*[66] was made of holy oak wood. An abundance of forests and swamps in the lands of Lithuania was the reason that agriculture remained rather primitive, however, never developing

into a widely practiced occupation. Even after the Christianization of Lithuania, Lithuanians still preferred wooden over metal tools, a holdover of the ancient pagan custom of worshiping wood. Of all the crops grown by Lithuanians, rye, flax, turnips, and hops are most commonly mentioned in historical sources.

The principal occupation for Lithuanians was hunting. Moose, bears, and aurochs[67] were prized above other game. The development of hunting in Lithuania was reflected by the inclusion of various breeds of hunting dogs and birds in the Lithuanian Statute.[68] Apiculture (beekeeping) was also quite prevalent in Lithuania, where mead[69] was the oldest and preferred beverage. Each Lithuanian family maintained a wide variety of livestock. Out of superstition, however, particular homes and even entire villages avoided domesticating certain animals, as it was believed that evil spirits would strangle the animals they did not like. Lithuanian craftsmanship remained relatively unadvanced, limited to the production of essential items. Women wove fabric, while men processed leather and constructed primitive agricultural tools. Only two types of more complex items are known to have been produced: musical instruments (e.g., wooden pipes and tambourines) and statues of the gods.

Trade between Lithuanians and foreigners was a longstanding practice. Historically, foreign merchants traveled to the shores of Prussia to purchase amber. An expansion of trade beginning in the 12th century was linked to the industrial growth of neighboring German, Swedish, Dutch, and Russian cities. According to the accounts of Adam of Bremen,[70] at the beginning of the 11th century, early Lithuanians used their own ships to transport their goods to the Swedish city of Birka. Goods such as furs, amber, copper, wax, and dried fish were traded for salt, cloth, various metals, weapons, and glass, among other things. Later, Lithuanian

raw materials were often transported by boat via the Pripyat and Dnieper Rivers to Turkey and Crimea in exchange for money and metal goods. Foreign merchants were highly respected in Lithuania, treated with great veneration, their rights considered inviolable.

In the context of the overall environment, intellectual pursuits were not a focus of energy or attention at this time. Chronology was based on important events (e.g., wars and epidemics). The early Lithuanian alphabet was extremely rudimentary, consisting of runes,[71] and never developing any further. By the 13th century, this alphabet was replaced by the writing systems of neighboring peoples. Because the Lithuanian written language appeared so late, much that is known about the early Lithuanian language is derived from individual words and phrases preserved in Russian and Prussian chronicles. There is reason to believe, however, that not all Lithuanian tribes were at the same cultural level during the period from the 9th to the 12th centuries. Furthermore, it is highly plausible that the Lithuanian tribes exhibited ethnographic differences and variable social organization. Conditions of backwardness persisted longer in secluded and less accessible areas, such as marshes and swamps, than in regions close to trade routes (lands near the Vistula River or near the Baltic Sea), where Lithuanian tribes could come into close contact with other peoples, thereby advancing as a society.

According to the accounts of chroniclers, Lithuanians especially enjoyed singing. All occasions in life—joyous, sorrowful, and ceremonial—were accompanied by song. Unfortunately, heroic and historic Lithuanian odes were not preserved: only folk songs (in Lithuanian, *dainos*) have survived to this day. The dainos are notable for their gentleness, melancholy, and love of nature. The flame of passion and spiritual turmoil are markedly absent from Lithuanian folk songs. Early Lithuanian poetry did not romanticize

crime and evildoing, nor did it tantalize the senses with seductive and immodest imagery. Rather, Lithuanian songs were quiet, calm, soft, simple, chaste, and youthfully innocent. As the distinguished folklorist and historian Nikolay Kostomarov[72] noted, Lithuanian poetry breathes with the warmth of a cozy village, and through its peacefulness, resembles a spring evening at the brink of dawn when, with beautiful fragrances filling the air and newly resurrected nature breaking through the snow, the thrill of youth and a slight pang of melancholy grip the soul.

Lithuanians, as great admirers of nature, constantly invoked images of plant and animal life that had symbolic meaning in their folk songs. Yellow flowers called rues, representing chastity and virginity, were especially prominent in these songs. The blooming of the rues symbolized the blossoming of virgin beauty. A maiden's first feelings of love were portrayed through the gathering of green marjoram, while her consent to marriage was depicted by the bestowal of a bouquet of rues to the groom. Of all the trees, the oak was evoked in song most often, as Lithuanians believed it to be holy. Certain birds were also mentioned quite frequently: cuckoos (representing truth and the future), pigeons, nightingales, and swallows.

A distinctive feature of Lithuanian community organization was its lack of centralization, which is usually accomplished through the establishment of cities (a characteristic prominent in other ethnic groups in the region such as the Slavs). In other words, Lithuanians did not have a central point of unity in their lands, where public matters could be discussed and issues could be resolved. According to the accounts of early Polish, German, and Russian authors, Lithuanians only began building cities in the 13th century. Instead of cities, Lithuanians had towns and villages, along with certain protected areas that could be used for shelter during foreign

invasion. The first cities were built in Prussia by the Teutons,[73] in Yotvingian lands by Volhynian princes, and on the border of Lithuania proper (Grodno and Novgorod) by Russian princes. The cities of Lithuania proper are only first mentioned during the second half of the 13th century or the first half of the 14th century. These included the cities of Kernavė (1250), Ariogala (1261), Telšiai, Lida (1320), and Vilnius (1323).

Along with the absence of cities that could unite the people of the Lithuanian lands, it is important to note that a monarchy, which could serve as an authoritative and unifying power, was also nonexistent. At first, pagan priests served both in a religious and primitive legislative capacity, establishing lawfulness and order among the Lithuanian peoples. As Lithuanians interacted with foreigners, however, an increasing divide between church and state began to appear. In the chronicles from this time period, elected princes are mentioned as having participated in battles between Lithuanians and foreigners (these elected princes were known by different names: in Prussia as *rikys* and in Lithuania as *kunigas*). Originally, these elected princes served only as military leaders, for which they received a portion of the loot and lands taken from the enemy. When war became a constant phenomenon, the elected princes began to gradually gain power and become more established in society.

Up to the second half of the 13th century, none of the Lithuanian tribes had autocratic monarchs or formidable political strength. These tribes were scattered across the Lithuanian lands and were split into weak and inappreciable political entities. The first princes were all elected: it was only beginning under the rule of Gediminas[74] that nobility was inherited. The chronicles of Peter of Dusburg[75] confirm that early Lithuanians did have community gatherings and *veches*[76], although these were uncommon events

that were only ordered to assembly by the pagan priests under very rare circumstances.

A written legal code did not exist in early Lithuania. Instead, it was customary for laws to be transmitted orally. Pagan priests ensured that these laws were followed. Serving as judges, they applied stern penalties to those who broke the law, especially by committing adultery and murder.

Because early Lithuanians settled lands that were largely inaccessible to neighboring tribes, they rarely engaged in military conflicts. Based on ancient songs that have survived to this day, it is clear that early Lithuanians expressed a strong aversion to war. Certain circumstances (largely resulting from invasions by Crusaders), however, forced Lithuanians to take up arms and participate in military activities. While Prussians fought on foot and Yotvingians fought on horseback, Lithuanians did both. In battle, Lithuanians were equipped with arrows, curved sabers, pikes, steel hammers, stones, and axes. The oldest weapon used by Lithuanians was the bludgeon. After crossing paths with the Germans, Lithuanians incorporated the crossbow into their arsenals as well. Firearms only came into use toward the end of the 14th century, under the reign of Vytautas the Great.[77] Military apparel consisted of moose and bear skins, along with large felt caps. The symbol of Lithuanian troops was a horseman in pursuit, later recognized as Pahonia (in Lithuanian, *Vytis*, meaning chase or pursuit)—the coat of arms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.[78]

The gathering of troops for military action followed a specific protocol. The prince cut a goat and then soaked an arrow in its blood. This arrow, along with a charred piece of wood, was sent from one house to the next to call the troops to service. Everyone who was required to serve in the military had to appear before their local military leader—avoiding military service was punishable by

death. Public disdain of military failure motivated troops to fight harder, with the act of desertion punishable by death. The practice of building wooden fortresses surrounded by trenches was only adopted by Lithuanians later, after they had fought against Russians, Poles, and Germans. Prior to this, buildings could only be defended by constructing them in areas that could not be reached by invaders. According to Peter of Dusburg, plunder was divided into three parts: the first was offered to the gods as a sacrifice, the second was offered to the Kriwe-Kriwajto and pagan priests, and the third was distributed among the troops.

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65 The Russian word князь ("knyaz") can be translated as prince, duke, or count. The title grand duke in Russian is великий князь, but князь outside that context is most commonly translated as prince.

66 The *sokha* (Russian: соха, Lithuanian: žagrė) is a light wooden single animal-drawn tillage implement, used for ploughing in a number of countries in the region.

67 A now extinct species of large wild cattle—the ancestor of domestic cattle—previously found in Asia, Europe, and North Africa. The species survived in Europe until 1627, when the last recorded aurochs died in the Jaktorów Forest, Poland.

68 (Литовський статут or Lytovskyi statut) The code of laws of the Lithuanian-Ruthenian state, published in the 16th century in three basic editions.

69 An alcoholic beverage made with honey and water, then fermented with yeast.

70 A German medieval chronicler who lived and worked in the second half of the 11th century, Adam of Bremen has long been considered one of the foremost historians and early ethnographers of the medieval period.

71 Letters of an ancient Germanic alphabet related to the Roman alphabet.

72 (In Russian, Николай Иванович Костомаров) One of the most distinguished Russian Imperial historians and author of many books, Nikolay Ivanovich Kostomarov (1817–1885) was also a poet, ethnographer, pan-slavist, and promoter of the so-called Narodniks movement in the Russian Empire.

73 An ancient tribe, first mentioned by Roman authors and generally classified as Germanic, best known for their participation in the Cimbrian War with the

Roman Republic in the late 2nd century BC.

74 One of the most significant individuals in early Lithuanian history, Gediminas (c. 1275–1341) was grand duke of Lithuania from 1315 or 1316 until his death and is credited with founding the political entity of Lithuania and expanding its territory, which later spanned the area ranging from the Baltic Sea to the Black Sea.

75 Also known as Peter of Duisburg, this chronicler of the Teutonic Knights lived from the second half of the 13th century until the first half of the 14th century (exact birth and death dates unknown).

76 In medieval Slavic countries, the veche (вече) was a popular assembly, heavily influenced by local traditions and the strength of the ruler. These nationwide gatherings in early medieval times are considered precursors of the subsequent unicameral parliament—known in Lithuania as the seĩmas (plural: seimaĩ)—and in Poland as the sejm (the Russian-language equivalent of which is сейм).

77 Born in 1350, Vytautas reigned from 1392 until his death in 1430. He is known as the national leader who helped to create a national consciousness and broke the power of the Teutonic Knights.

78 Note: The appearance of a new Lithuanian coat of arms—a horseman in pursuit—to replace the old coat of arms, a centaur, is historically attributed to Prince Narimantas (the second eldest son of Grand Duke of Lithuania Gediminas, Narimantas lived from approximately 1277 to 1348).

The only known contemporary image of Yaroslav I the Wise (c. 978–1054), on his seal (from Wikipedia).

Chapter 4

Lithuanian relations with Normans, Russians, Poles, and Germans. The Livonian and Teutonic Orders. The beginning of Lithuanian government. A characterization of the legendary period.

Early Lithuanians spent many centuries of isolation in the regions of the Western Dvina and Neman Rivers before they first encountered foreign peoples. According to Lithuanian tradition, the first group to make contact with the Lithuanian people were the Normans. This ethnic group first appeared in Lithuania to conquer and plunder, but later arrived in the Lithuanian lands as peaceful settlers. The latter were migrants from Scandinavia who, as Christianity was spreading throughout their native lands, fled their

homes to preserve their pagan religion. These Normans that arrived in Lithuania became the reformers of early Lithuanian religion. Additionally, because they were considerably more advanced than Lithuanians, these Norman migrants and their descendants became leaders of Lithuanian *druzhinas*,[79] laying the foundations for a system of government in which power was held by princes.

Following the Scandinavians, Russians also began to develop relationships with the Lithuanians. These relationships were the result of frequent trips made by Russian princes to Lithuania to worship the Lithuanian gods.[80]

These relations were further bolstered through Lithuanian trade with Novgorodians and Polochans[81] during the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries. This relationship was finally strengthened by the construction of Russian settlements on Lithuanian lands, supported by the grand princes[82] of Kyiv during the 11th and 12 centuries. For example, when Yaroslav the Wise conquered the southeastern portion of Lithuania, he established a number of military settlements, which were placed under the authority of a special vicar, and provided troops to maintain order in the area. Nestor the Chronicler notes that in 1045, "Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise placed a special tax on Lithuanians"—the first historical mention of Lithuanians in Russian chronicles. Prince of Polotsk Boris (Rogvolod) Vseslavich in 1102 and Prince of Volhynia Yaroslav Sviatopolkovich in 1112 placed certain Lithuanian lands under their individual rule.

Already toward the end of the 12th century, however, a new pattern in the history of the Western Rus' could be observed: this mighty nation, assembled through the work of Kyivan princes during the 10th and 11th centuries, was headed for decentralization. Individual regions of the Russian lands, citing local differences and rising birth counts of noble families, requested

independence. Thus, the authority and influence of the grand princes of Kyiv gradually diminished. The first land of Rus' to gain independence was the Polotsk region. By 1130, the lands of Polotsk became a fully sovereign principality, but it was not long before an intense internal struggle for power began. To advance their positions in this deadly conflict, both the princes and the veches requested the aid of their Russian brethren, and even that of Germans and Lithuanians.

As a result, Lithuanians gradually became involved in the internal affairs of the Polotsk lands and learned of the weaknesses and internal disarray in that region. By the end of the 12th century, Lithuanians no longer limited their involvement in the Polotsk conflict to procurement of treasure. Initially, military campaigns were sent to the lands of Rus' to bring back treasure, but the objective quickly switched to territorial conquest. Beginning in the 13th century, Lithuanian attacks on the Russian lands increased in frequency. These attacks, no longer limited to the lands of Polotsk, extended to other Russian lands, including Turov, Volhynia, Novgorod (1200), Pskov (1213), and Smolensk. By the middle of the 13th century, Lithuanian military campaigns even extended as far as the borders of the Principality of Kiev.

After the Scandinavians and Russians established close relations with Lithuanians, the Poles followed suit. The spark to initiate this interaction came with the new millennium, when King Bolesław I the Brave, motivated by the martyrdom of two Catholic missionaries—Saints Adalbert of Prague and Bruno of Querfurt, in the lands of Prussia—set out to punish the Prussian tribe for its actions. Thus, in 1010, King Bolesław I the Brave invaded the Prussian lands with an enormous army, plundering everything in his path. It was at this time when Romuva was destroyed and all the idols obliterated.[83] After this military campaign, Polish-Lithuanian

relations cooled for 100 years, only renewed approximately another century later, under Bolesław III Wrymouth.

In 1110, the Poles engaged in another destructive military campaign against the Prussian tribe. Victorious once again, the Poles returned to their native lands with much loot and many Prussian prisoners. From this point onward, Polish attacks on Lithuania appear with increasing frequency in historical sources. For example, in 1146 Bolesław III Wrymouth led a military campaign into Prussian lands, while in 1191, Casimir II the Just attacked the Yotvingians. Peaceful relations between Poles and Lithuanians only began in the first half of the 14th century, when King Władysław I Łokietek ruled Poland and Grand Duke Gediminas ruled Lithuania.

The first encounter between Lithuanians and Germans occurred toward the end of the 12th century on the island of Gotland in the Baltic Sea. It was there that merchants from Bremen and Hamburg began to trade with merchants from Novgorod, establishing yards for storing their goods in Livonia. When Hartwig II, archbishop of Bremen, learned from the merchants that pagans lived in Livonia and its neighboring lands, he sent the Augustinian monk Meinhard there to convert the natives to Catholicism. At first, together with the Russian Prince of Polotsk Vladimir, who had great influence on Livonia, Meinhard was able to baptize many pagans and even to construct four Catholic churches. When Meinhard required Livonians to accept the authority of the bishop of Bremen and pay a ten percent tithe to the Church, however, the natives began to protest. To quell these protests, Meinhard responded with military force.

After Meinhard's death in 1196, a monk named Berthold arrived in Livonia to take his place. Before long, Berthold was killed by the natives of Livonia. Finally, another bishop—Albert—was sent from Bremen to Livonia in 1200. Bishop Albert was smart, clever,

cunning, and very energetic. He arrived at the mouth of the Dvina River with a multitude of knights. In 1201, Bishop Albert established the city of Riga. To protect this newly built city from frequent pagan raids, Bishop Albert requested a few hundred knights to be sent from Germany. In 1202, Bishop Albert created the Livonian Order (also referred to as the Brothers of the Sword), whose objective was to forcibly spread Catholicism among the Lithuanian-Finnish pagan tribes. After this Order was created, missionary activity rapidly took off. Initially, Bishop Albert subdued the Latgalians and Livonians. Soon thereafter, the Curonians were also subdued. Because of Russian and Lithuanian attacks, however, the Livonian Order[84] was forced to turn to the Teutonic Order for support.

The Teutonic Order, consisting of German knights, was established in Palestine during the Crusades. After Jerusalem fell into Muslim hands, the Teutonic knights returned to Europe, temporarily settling in Italy. It was to Italy that the Livonian Order sent delegates with an offer of unity, but the Teutonic knights rejected this offer. After a short period, Konrad I of Masovia pressured by the attacks of the Prussian tribes in Lithuania, likewise turned to the Teutonic Order for support, offering them the opportunity to settle in his lands. The Teutonic knights accepted this offer, and in 1231, settled in the lands of Masovia. In 1237, Pope Gregory IX approved of the union of the Teutonic and Livonian Orders, which from that moment began to act as a single organization. At the same time, the Livonian Order was no longer under the authority of the Bishop of Riga. Both Orders (at this point collectively using the name "Teutonic Order"), under the guise of spreading Christianity in the Lithuanian lands, were actually determined to destroy the Lithuanian tribes.

Benefitting from the financial support of the Catholic world, the German knights began continuous military activity in Lithuania, gradually extending the borders of their land possessions. As these knights made their way through the Lithuanian lands, decimating everything in their way, they forcibly baptized the locals, enslaved those who resisted their rule, heavily taxed those who surrendered, confiscated land possessions (which were then given to German settlers), and implemented a strict approach to the administration of government.

The Lithuanian tribes attempted to defend their sovereignty with all the military strength they had, but their isolation and lack of inter-tribal unity made them weak opponents for the invading Germans. After several decades of unsuccessful battles, it became apparent that if conditions would not change, all the tribes would eventually be defeated. It was at that point that the importance of unity and collaboration became readily apparent.

Unable to unite on their own, the Lithuanian tribes turned to the governments of neighboring lands for support. Two Lithuanian ethnic groups, in greatest danger of being conquered, were the first to make an effort to defend themselves through government relations. The Latvians accepted the authority of the prince of Polotsk as their ruler, and with his help, attempted to fight off the Livonian Order. The Prussians subordinated themselves to their neighbors, the Dukes of Pomerania Swietopelk II and Mstislaw (r. 1242–1266). These first attempts at international unity did not achieve the intended goal, however: neither the prince of Polotsk nor the duke of Pomerania had the necessary military strength and authority to form, during wartime, a formidable and durable national government out of the fragmented Lithuanian tribes. These attempts only temporarily stalled the advance of the German knights.

By the end of the 13th century, the Teutonic Order had already conquered the Prussians, the Latvians, and the Semigallians. Thus, as the borders of the Teutonic Order's land possessions approached the lands of Lithuania proper and Samogitia, defense for the peoples of these lands was a top priority. As the troops defended their lands from the onslaught of the Teutonic knights, the people used this opportunity to establish a stronger, united system of government, which greatly improved their military strength. This newly acquired military might also resulted from new relations with Rus' that were developed throughout the 13th century. By the middle of the 13th century, not long before the invasion by Batu Khan, many Lithuanian military leaders managed to conquer various lands in the Polotsk, Turov, and Smolensk principalities, instating themselves as independent rulers there. The first victory over the Mongols in the lands of the Rus' and Lithuania is historically attributed to one of these military leaders, Skirmunt.

In summing up the legendary period of Lithuanian history, several points are important. Prior to the second half of the 13th century, Lithuanians were not politically unified. The Lithuanian peoples lived in isolation, fragmented into small and weak tribes and clans. Under these conditions, the factors that could have led to national unity were common religious beliefs, ancestral roots, and cultural traditions. There is reason to believe that without external military threats, the Lithuanians would have developed a theocracy with a high priest at the head of the government. This never happened, however. Pressure from the neighboring Poles and Germans forced the Lithuanian tribes to unite into a single political entity under the authority of a strong and energetic secular grand duke.

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79 Derived from the Russian (дружина, which can be translated into English as "fellowship" or "circle of friends"), a druzhina was a retinue (a group of advisors) that served a prince or duke.

80 Note: According to the 11th-century Chronicles of Adam of Bremen and the *Ioachim Chronicle* (discovered in the 18th century by Russian historian Vasily Tatishchev, believed to be a 17th-century compilation of earlier sources describing events in the 10th and 11th centuries made by Patriarch Joachim of Moscow).

81 Inhabitants of Polotsk, a historical city in Belarus, situated on the Dvina River.

82 Equivalent to the Lithuanian "grand duke."

83 Although no corroborating documentation could be located on what the author has written in this chapter about the ancient temple of Romuva, we have allowed his words to stand as is. This decision was based on consideration of the book as a historical artifact, as explained in the introduction.

84 Note: The original name of this order as assigned by the Pope was "*Fratres militiae Christi*." At the time when the order was established, it was also assigned a distinct coat of arms: a red cross and a sword on a white background. It was based on this symbol that the order was often referred to as the "Brothers of the Sword" or "*fratres ensiferi*." This order, approved by Pope Innocent III in 1203, was placed under the authority of a bishop.

The Second Era
The Golden Age—From 1204 to 1386

The ruins of Kaunas Castle, captured by the Teutonic Knights in 1362 (from de Danilowicz, 1919, p. 24).

Chapter 5

Ryngold. Mindaugas. The pursuit of national Lithuanian unity. Lithuania and the Livonian Order. Lithuania and Western Rus'. The rebellion against the Teutonic Order in Lithuania. The death of Mindaugas.

The final establishment of the Grand Duchy in the Lithuanian lands of Rus' played a principal role in uniting the separate Lithuanian

tribes into a single, strong, and formidable government entity. The earliest credible historical records of this union can be found from the period during which Mindaugas came to power in a city of Black Ruthenia called Novogrudok (previously, Novgorodok), thereby setting the precedent of authority for the grand duke to reign.[85]

There is reason to believe that it was actually Ryngold (r. 1204–1239[86]), Duke of Kernavė and the father of Mindaugas, who was responsible for organizing the Grand Duchy.[87] After moving the capital from Kernavė to the heart of Black Ruthenia—Novogrudok—Ryngold successfully consolidated the various fragmented Lithuanian lands under a single governmental authority. This was made possible by the fact that a vast majority of the settlers abiding in these lands—including Lithuania, Samogitia, Livonia, and Courland—accepted his rule as supreme (grand) duke. Through his frequent military campaigns to the lands of Rus', Ryngold reached the cities of Staraya Russa, Novgorod, Pskov, and Polotsk, where he also managed to become accepted as leader. The Russian princes of Lutsk, Volhynia, and Drutsk all tried to prevent Ryngold's invasion, but their efforts proved futile. In 1235, in the city of Mogilno near the Neman River (close to Novogrudok), they were overpowered by Ryngold's forces. From this point onward, relations between Lithuania and the Western Rus' became much closer, as both nations shared the common goal of defending their lands from the onslaught of German and Mongolian invaders.

Ryngold was succeeded by his son Mindaugas (r. 1239–1263). The first mention of Mindaugas appears in the Hypatian Codex[88] under the year 1235: "Daniel of Galicia[89] sought to join forces with Mindaugas in order to better defend against High Duke[90] Konrad I of Masovia." Continuing the work of his father—uniting various Lithuanian lands and expanding Lithuanian possessions in Rus'

through military campaigns—Mindaugas was able to grow the strength of his military by integrating newly occupied lands into Lithuania. This newly acquired strength both allowed him to continue his conquest of Rus' and to subordinate less powerful Lithuanian rulers (such as the dukes of small regions) under his dominion. Using his authority in this way, Mindaugas was able to maintain and acquire new land possessions, as well as to assert his control over smaller Lithuanian possessions.

This policy of unification soon caused a great deal of discontent among Lithuanian dukes and Russian princes. Banished by his uncle Mindaugas, Tautvilas accepted Christianity, forming a coalition with Daniel of Galicia. Together, they directed the Livonian Order to attack Mindaugas. At the same time, Mindaugas was facing internal conflict. Horrified by his plans for centralization and unification, the Yotvingians and Samogitians, under the leadership of Gedvydas and Vykintas, turned on Mindaugas. Thus, a formidable faction had assembled to resist the authority of Mindaugas: Galicia-Volhynian rulers, the knights of the Livonian Order, Semagotians, and Yotvingians. Through masterful diplomatic strategy, however, Mindaugas quickly resolved the dilemma, even saving his plans for Lithuanian unification. To avoid the onslaught of the Livonian Order, Mindaugas publicly proclaimed his willingness to be baptized. As a result, the commander of the Livonian Order in Lithuania, seeing the opportunity to present his order as an Apostolic organization, quickly rushed to defend Mindaugas. In 1251, Mindaugas was baptized in the city of Novogrudok. Shortly thereafter, in 1253, Mindaugas and his wife Martha were crowned by the Bishop of Chełmno, following the directive of Pope Innocent IV.

Having eliminated the threat of the Livonian Order, Mindaugas established an alliance with Daniel of Galicia under the following three terms: First, Mindaugas was to grant vassal rights for all of

Black Ruthenia and Novogrudok to Daniel of Galicia's eldest son—Roman. Second, peace was to be ensured through the marriage of Daniel of Galicia's youngest son, Shvarn, to the daughter of Mindaugas. Third, Mindaugas was to relocate to the city Kernavė. These conditions were all extremely favorable to Mindaugas. Although he would have to give up his control of Black Ruthenia, he would gain something of much greater value: an alliance with the powerful Princes of Galicia.

With these connections established, Mindaugas was free to pursue his vision for Lithuania: unification of the remainder of the isolated Lithuanian tribes under the banner of one nation. Mindaugas was able to quell the Samogitian uprising in 1259 by offering the entire land of Samogitia to the Crusaders, thereby showing his willingness to cooperate with the Teutonic Order. Mindaugas did not stop there, however. In 1260, he issued a charter granting the Teutonic Order the right to rule over all of Lithuania in the event that his dynasty comes to an end, for lack of a successor.

It is important to note that all these actions taken by Mindaugas (such as his baptism) were well-calculated political plays to achieve his end goal—unification of the Lithuanian lands. At this point in time, it was crucial for Lithuania and Samogitia to understand the dangers of remaining fragmented: sooner or later, they would fall prey to the Teutonic Order and would have to deal with the subsequent repercussions. The policies of tolerance and accommodation that Mindaugas implemented in his relations with the Crusaders brought about the intended result of prompting substantial civil unrest among the Lithuanian people.

The harsh rule of the Teutonic Order in the lands granted to it; the forced Christianization of the settlers of those lands; the seizure of land from the natives and subsequent redistribution to Catholic clergy, knights, and German settlers; the collection of tithes and special taxes; and, finally, the threat of complete subordination of

all Lithuanian lands to the Teutonic Order—all of these, collectively, functioned as contributing factors to the negative view of the Teutonic Order that the Lithuanians and Yotvingians now had, thereby facilitating Mindaugas's plan to turn the people against the Teutonic Order and reclaim the lands granted to the order by Mindaugas. In 1260, this unrest turned into a large-scale uprising of the Samogitians and Yotvingians, who had been the first to fall under the rule of the Teutonic Order. This uprising allowed the Samogitians and Yotvingians to gather enough support to defeat the Teutonic forces during the Battle of Durbe (in Courland). The victory in Durbe led to uprisings across all of Lithuania and the Prussian lands, inflicting many devastating losses of territorial possessions for the Teutonic Order.

At the first signs of national insurrection, Mindaugas immediately rejected Christianity, severed relations with the Teutonic Order, declared himself to be its greatest enemy, and took command of the national uprising against the Teutonic knights. As a result, the Teutonic Order lost all the land possessions it had received from Mindaugas and acquired through many years of exhausting military conquest.

The same internal conflicts that were the cause of his earlier failure soon resurfaced, however. As soon as the threat of Teutonic takeover was dissipated, local rulers once again clashed with the grand duke. Disturbed by the autocratic rule of Mindaugas, many Lithuanian dukes and Russian princes conspired against him. In 1263, when Mindaugas was leading a military campaign against the Prince of Bryansk Roman Mikhailovich the Old, the conspirators—among whose ranks were Daumantas,[91] Treniota, and Tautvilas[92]—assassinated Mindaugas, together with two of his sons, at a military encampment.

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85 At this time, his title was that of duke, not yet grand duke.

86 Different sources offer different dates for this mythological figure.

87 Note: Ryngold's genealogy is quite mysterious. According to certain information contained in the Resurrection Chronicle (an extensive chronicle, made between 1542 and 1544), it is hypothesized that Ryngold came from a long line of princes of Polotsk who had moved to Lithuania. However, more detailed and credible information is required to verify this conjecture.

88 A compilation of three chronicles—the Primary Chronicle, the Kyiv Chronicle, and the Galician-Volhynian Chronicle—the most important source of historical data for Southern Rus'.

89 The first king of Ruthenia, who reigned from 1253–1264.

90 Generally speaking, the title of High Duke was used for Polish monarchs beginning during the Fragmentation of Poland (1138–1320), after which rulers took the title of king or queen.

91 A Lithuanian prince perhaps best remembered as a military leader of the Principality of Pskov between 1266 and 1299, during whose tenure Pskov became de facto independent from Novgorod.

92 To be discussed in the following chapter.

Treniota (c. 1210–1264), the grand duke of Lithuania (1263–1264), who usurped the throne from his uncle Mindaugas, the first and only king of Lithuania, reverting the nation to paganism (Wikipedia).

Chapter 6

The Dark Ages. Treniota. Shvarn. Vaišelga. Traidenis. The threat of Lithuanian national collapse. The reign of a new Samogitian dynasty. Butvydas. Vytenis.

After the death of Mindaugas, Lithuania descended into a historical period that can be referred to as the "Dark Ages." During this time, the title of grand duke was transferred back and forth between

countless rulers. However, the nation that was built by Mindaugas was strong enough to withstand this internal disarray. The conspirators, disturbed by the autocratic rule of Mindaugas and having killed him over his vision of national unity, quickly turned with great desire to the seat of grand duke, themselves lusting after the power and authority that Mindaugas had worked to establish. Great hostility soon developed between the conspirators, with the objective of maintaining local and regional sovereignty quickly forgotten and the fight over the throne of the grand duke fully engrossing them.

Treniota, the Duke of Samogitia (r. 1264–1265[93]) and a leader of the pagan faction, emerged victorious during this conflict, ascending to the throne in 1264. Only a year later, he too was assassinated, allowing Mindaugas's son Vaišelga (r. 1264–1267) to become the new grand duke. Having established his authority, Vaišelga wanted to increase the amount of influence that Rus' had on Lithuanian culture. To this end, he decided to include the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a constituent of the Galician-Volhynian lands. With this in mind, Vaišelga declared himself to be the son of Vasilko Romanovich, the younger brother of Daniel of Galicia—adopting one of Daniel's sons, Shvarn, to whom he gave the Lithuanian throne. When Shvarn died in 1268[94] without leaving any heirs to the throne, however, Vaišelga once again became grand duke of Lithuania. A year later, Vaišelga was murdered by one of Shvarn's brothers, Leo I of Galicia, who hoped to claim the title of grand duke for himself.

After the death of Vaišelga, the national-pagan faction in Lithuania first proclaimed Narimantas,[95] and then Traidenis (1271-1282), as grand duke of Lithuania. Having received the authority to rule, Traidenis settled in Kernavė. Traidenis spent the entirety of his

rule as grand duke fighting against the rulers of Galicia-Volhynia, the Poles, and the Germans.

At this point, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania began to lose both its strength as a nation and its internal unity, which Lithuania had achieved under the rule of Mindaugas. After Shvarn's death, one Lithuanian tribe after another was defeated by foreign invaders, whose possessions now tightly encircled Samogitia and Lithuania proper. It was not long before the Livonian Order, unhindered by a few insignificant defeats in clashes with the Lithuanians, successfully conquered the entirety of Samogitia. The Teutonic knights finally put an end to the Prussian rebellion, forcing them to either accept the authority of the Teutonic Order or flee their native lands and settle in Lithuania proper.

At the same time, despite Lithuanian attacks on Poland and Masovia, the Polish dukes acquired Yotvingian lands not yet conquered by the Volhynian princes. As a result, the danger that was temporarily avoided through the policies implemented by Mindaugas once again returned to threaten the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The rulers of the Grand Duchy realized that in order to save their beloved nation, they would first have to modify their current policy of self-reliance and welcome outside aid. This aid came in the form of an alliance with Rus', including lands that had already been annexed by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and those directly under the control of Rus'. This historic change in policy was implemented by a new generation of Lithuanian rulers that came to power toward the end of the 13th century: Vytenis and his successor, Gediminas.

As a result of the absence of reliable historical sources concerning the foundation and development of the new Samogitian dynasty, little is known about Butvydas. There is reason to believe that prior to his rule as grand duke, Butvydas united Northern Lithuania and Samogitia (at the time that Traidenis ruled as grand

duke). After the death of Traidenis, Butvydas (r. 1290–1295) and later, his son Vytenis (r. 1295–1316), ascended to the seat of the grand duke. A large part of Vytenis's rule was devoted to battle against the Poles and the knights of the Teutonic Order. Although the results were of varying success, Vytenis successfully defended the lands of Lithuania from foreign conquest and continued unification efforts in the lands of Lithuania and Rus'. However, it was the work of Gediminas (either the son or brother of Vytenis) that renewed the power of Lithuania, and it was under his rule that Lithuania was strengthened and significantly expanded its territorial possessions.

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93 In some other sources, the ruling period is given as 1263 to 1264.

94 According to other sources, the year this happened is actually 1269 (see for example the *Universal Lithuanian Encyclopedia*—in Lithuanian,*Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija*).

95 According to the Bychowiec Chronicle (the third collection of Belarusian-Lithuanian chronicles, created in the 16th century, in the Western Russian language), the possibly legendary Narimantas, an older brother of Traidenis, may have temporarily served as grand duke for a year before Traidenis ascended to the throne. This Grand Duke of Lithuania Narimantas is not to be confused with Prince of Polotsk Narimantas, who ruled later (in the 14th century).
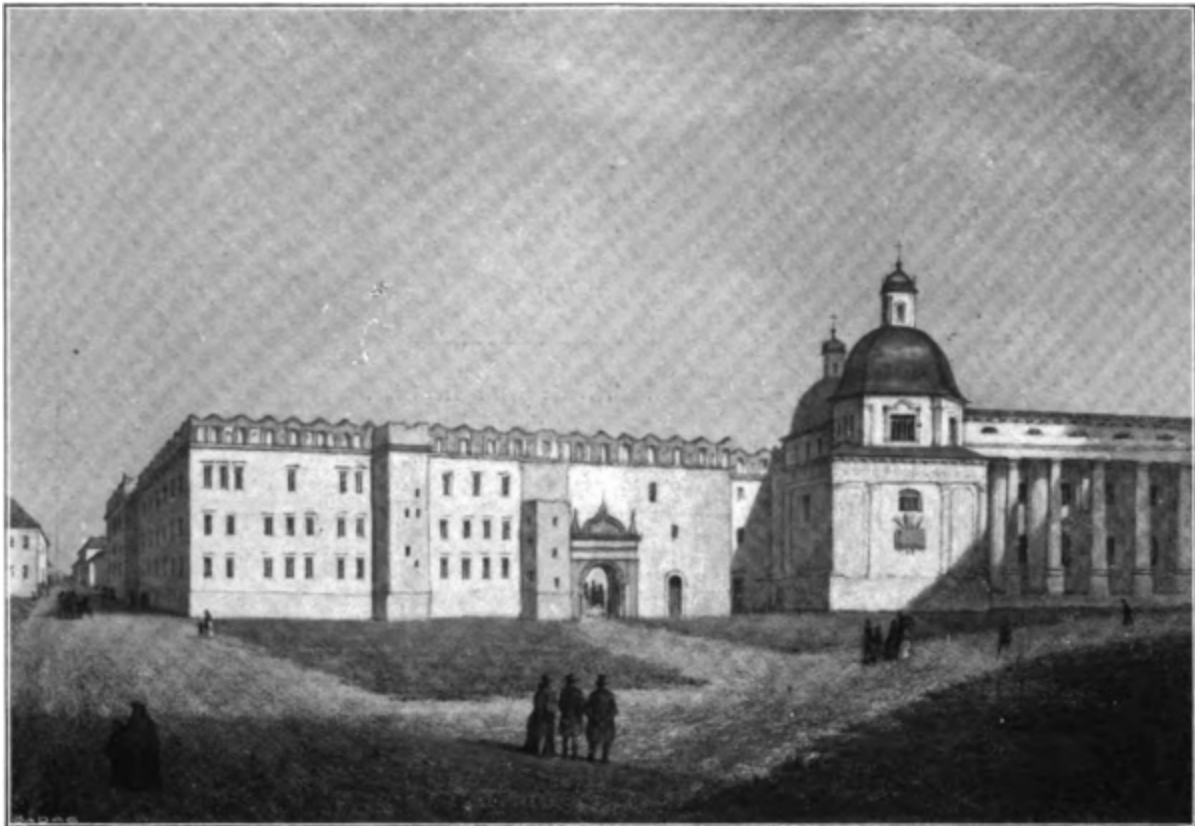
Lower Castle built by Gediminas in 1332, Vilnius (from de Danilowicz, 1919, p. 47).

Chapter 7

Gediminas. Relations with Rus'. Relations with the Teutonic and Livonian Orders. The first clashes with the Princes of Moscow in Pskov and Novgorod. The influence of Rus' during the era of Gediminas. Gediminas's domestic policy.

Gediminas (r. 1316–1341) significantly expanded Lithuanian territorial possessions through the annexation of many Rus'ian regions. This was accomplished not through military conquest, but rather through diplomacy and marriage of state.[96] With the fall of Kyiv, Volodymyr-Volynskyi, and Polotsk, certain princes of

Southwestern Rus'—who relied heavily on these cities for support and were not strong enough to survive on their own—were compelled to accept the authority of the Lithuanian grand duke. Among these were the princes of Smolensk, Turov, and Pinsk, who initially served as assistants to Gediminas, but later became representatives of the grand duke's authority in their native lands. Since the inhabitants of these regions of the lands of Rus' desperately wanted to free themselves from harsh Tatar rule, they welcomed Lithuanian governance, seeing it as highly favorable for them. Gediminas displayed his political prowess through the multitude of familial ties he established through marriages of state. In this way, Gediminas successfully annexed additional Russian regions (the Principalities of Vitebsk and Volhynia)[97] and formed alliances with many powerful rulers.[98]

The formation of familial ties with the king of Poland and the prince of Masovia was especially beneficial for Lithuania. Formerly the enemy, the Poles now became trusted allies in the fight against a common foe: the Teutonic Order. Through joint military action, Lithuania and Poland inflicted upon the Teutonic knights many defeats, the greatest of which occurred during the Battle of Płowce in 1331. To counter the Livonian Order, Gediminas took advantage of the existing enmity between the Order and the city of Riga, establishing an alliance with the archbishop of Riga. Through this relationship, Gediminas greatly assisted the people of Riga in their fight against the Livonian knights.

In the struggle against the princes of Galicia-Volhynia, who were at one point allied with the Teutonic Order, Gediminas successfully formed various alliances that brought Podlachia[99] (including the cities of Brest, Drohiczyn, Mielnik, and Bielsk) under Lithuanian control. Having established his rule in these Russian lands, Gediminas sought to add two more regions to the territorial

possessions of Lithuania: Pskov and Novgorod. The Grand Prince of Moscow Ivan Kalita did not let Gediminas have his way, however, blocking Gediminas's plan of conquest by significantly increasing the strength of the Moscow Principality and launching military campaigns into the lands of Western Rus'.

As a result, Rus' was essentially divided into two political centers located on opposite sides of the Rus'ian territory: Lithuania in the west and Moscow in the east—with both nations similarly seeking territorial expansion. Thus, it was only a matter of time before Lithuania and Moscow would engage in military conflict over their common intentions of dominating the lands of Rus'. Before long, this expected clash did take place during the rule of Gediminas: first over Pskov, then over Novgorod, with the Grand Prince of Moscow Ivan Kalita emerging victorious in both battles.

When Gediminas ascended to the position of grand duke, the government of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was already heavily influenced by its Rus'ian regions, which accounted for two-thirds of all Lithuanian lands. In other words, the inhabitants of those lands played a significant role in the administration of Lithuanian government. This was especially apparent in the management of the military. Well-organized and formidable regiments quickly replaced the disarray that was characteristic of the early Lithuanian military. Furthermore, the military was no longer limited to quick invasions and looting. Instead, troops were deployed for extended periods of time on lengthy campaigns and were well equipped to properly execute sieges of cities, with ready availability of trebuchets[100] and large encampments for staging troops. Lithuanians also no longer had to rely on topographic features (such as swamps, marshes, and lakes) to defend their lands. Now they could rely on fortresses and other defensive structures that had been erected to defend settlements from foreign invasion. It is

important to note that a significant portion of the Lithuanian military was composed of entirely Rus'ian regiments led by Rus'ian commanders, who were primarily selected from the local nobility.[101]

For lack of well-preserved historical sources, little is known about the domestic policy that Gediminas implemented during his rule. It is understood, however, that Gediminas worked to populate uninhabited lands and to expand European crafts in Lithuania. These objectives were realized through the invitation of Western settlers, craftsmen, and scholars to the lands of Lithuania, the provision of various incentives to these migrants, and the establishment of new cities (e.g., Trakai—on the banks of Lake Galvė—in 1320, and Vilnius in 1323).[102]

Although he was a pagan himself, Gediminas was exceptionally tolerant of all Christians. None of the chronicles makes mention of any Christian persecution. Rather, there is evidence that Gediminas saw Christianity as a sign of progress and was dedicated to protecting the rights of Christian right. At the same time, Gediminas had to be mindful of the national Lithuanian pagan faction, which had maintained its influence from the time of Mindaugas (this pagan faction was the primary reason that Mindaugas rejected his Christian faith). The Lithuanian pagan faction fervently supported the pagan priesthood and fueled the national hatred of Teutonic and Livonian knights, who used military force to advance their Catholic faith, pillage settlements, and acquire new lands. Considering the stance of the public on these matters, Gediminas acted as a savvy politician, avoiding conflict with the pagan faction and using the people's loathing of the Crusaders to defend Lithuanian sovereignty and maintain his authority.

In 1341, Gediminas was killed in battle against the Crusaders, shot by a firearm, a weapon that had recently become implemented in Western Europe and appeared for the first time in Teutonic arsenals. Thus, the intelligent and energetic grand duke—masterful in his ability to find common ground and devoted to the defense of religious freedom and civil rights—died fighting for his nation. Never infringing on the rights and liberties of his people, never abolishing tradition and customs, and never getting involved in the local affairs of the lands under his control, Gediminas served as a leader who held supreme the interests of the Grand Duchy. As a result of the overwhelming public support that he received from the many regions he annexed, Gediminas laid the foundation for the Lithuanian dominance that would become apparent in the coming years.

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96 A diplomatic marriage or union arranged between two members of different nation-states or internally, between two power blocs, for mutual benefit.

97 Note: Gediminas married one of his sons, Algirdas, to Maria, the only child of Yaroslav of Vitebsk. After Yaroslav's death in 1320, Algirdas inherited the Vitebsk region. Gediminas married another one of his sons, Liubartas, to the daughter of Leo II, the last prince of Volhynia. After Leo's death in 1325, Liubartas inherited the lands of Volhynia.

98 Note: Gediminas wedded one of his daughters, Augusta, with Simeon (later, the grand prince of Moscow), the son of Ivan I of Moscow. Gediminas wedded another one of his daughters, Maria, with his enemy, Dmitry Mikhaylovich (grand prince) of Tver. Gediminas wedded his third daughter, Aldona, with Casimir III the Great (later King of Poland), the son of King Władysław I Łokietek. Finally, Gediminas wedded another one of his daughters, Eufemia, with Prince of Masovia Yuri II Boleslav (later King of Rus').

99 A historical region in the eastern part of present-day Poland. Historical regions are geographic areas that at some time in the past had a cultural, ethnic, linguistic, or political basis, regardless of latter-day borders. According to Sven Tägil (editor of *Regions in Central Europe: The Legacy of History*, C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 1999), "The fundamental principle underlying this [concept] is that older political and mental structures exist [that] exercise greater influence on the spatial-social identity of individuals than is understood by the

contemporary world, bound to and often blinded by its own worldview—e.g., the focus on the nation-state" (p. 151).

100 A type of catapult, utilizing a long arm to throw a projectile, a weapon commonly used for sieges until the advent of gunpowder.

101 Note: The most prominent military commander was David, the ruler of Grodno, who was married to one of Gediminas's daughters. David and the Lithuanian forces under his command defeated the Livonian and Teutonic knights on many occasions.

102 Note: Even prior to the rule of Gediminas, a temple dedicated to Perkūnas was located in the area of present-day Vilnius. It is quite possible that a settlement had already existed in these lands, and that Gediminas erected two castles there in order to strengthen his rule. It is also believed that Gediminas moved the capital here from Trakai in 1323.

Algirdas (c. 1296—1377), grand duke of Lithuania from 1345 to 1377, who made the country one of the largest European states of his day and whose son Jogaila became Władysław II Jagiełło, king of united Poland and Lithuania.

Chapter 8

The state of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after Gediminas's death.
Political turmoil prior to the reign of Algirdas. War against the German
knights. Kęstutis. The annexation of Rus'ian principalities and Lithuanian

relations with Rus'. War against Poland over the Galicia-Volhynian lands. The growth of Rus'ian influence. A general overview of Algirdas's rule.

Prior to his death, Gediminas allotted various lands to his seven sons for local rule. The eldest, Manvydas, received Kernavė and Slonim in Southern Rus'. Algirdas inherited the Krevo and Vitebsk principalities. Kęstutis was given dominion over Brest, Grodno, and Samogitia. Narimantas received Pinsk. Liubartas was given control over Volhynia. Karijotas inherited all the lands of Black Ruthenia, with the exception of Slonim (which was given to Manvydas). There is insufficient evidence as to whether Jaunutis was given any lands over which to rule, although it has been established that Jaunutis and his mother, Jewna, settled in Vilnius after Gediminas's death. The lands of Polotsk were ruled by Gediminas's nephew Liubko (son of Vainius). Gediminas died so suddenly that he was unable to appoint to the throne a successor who could supervise and direct the various local rulers. As a result of the new division of Lithuanian lands, the nation was once again in danger of fragmentation into independently ruled territories. This domestic struggle to maintain unity was exploited by foreign nations as an opportunity to seize neighboring Lithuanian regions. In fact, the king of Poland did not hesitate to make a move on Volhynia, and the German knights were quick to begin military campaigns in the northwestern Lithuanian lands.

Fortunately for Lithuania, this period of uncertainty only lasted for approximately five years. The turmoil in Lithuania was ended through the collaborative efforts of Algirdas and Kęstutis, the most prominent and talented sons of Gediminas. During the winter of 1345, the two brothers seized Vilnius, deposed Jaunutis, and proclaimed Algirdas (r. 1345–1377) as the new grand duke of Lithuania. Although Algirdas was officially the head of the nation, the two brothers made a pact that effectively made them co-rulers.

Although Algirdas and Kęstutis were polar opposites in terms of their personalities, political interests, and preferences, the two brothers had no difficulty maintaining an unbreakable bond. Through their collaboration, the two co-rulers complemented one another's abilities, governing with all the qualities called for by the position of grand duke.

While Lithuania was reorganizing its domestic affairs, the German Crusaders modified their military strategy. Instead of employing large campaigns, they turned to small and frequent invasions. During the reign of Algirdas alone, more than one hundred of these raids were conducted. Because Lithuanian and Teutonic forces were relatively equal in strength, neither side enjoyed any significant victories over the other. Additionally, despite the Teutonic knights' best efforts, they were unable to expand their borders as far into Lithuanian lands as they had hoped, leaving most of the territorial boundaries unchanged from the previous century.

Through unity and centralization, Lithuania thwarted the Teutonic and Livonian Orders' attacks, maintaining its sovereignty. Kęstutis (r. 1345–1382) emerged as the hero of this arduous fight for Lithuanian autonomy. Serving as co-ruler of Lithuania with his brother Algirdas and as duke of Trakai, Kęstutis was loved by the native Lithuanian population for his self-sacrifice and dedication to the Lithuanian people and their pagan cultural tradition. Because of their trust in Kęstutis as a leader, Lithuanians respected his authority and allowed him to wield great power. Unique in his openness, sincerity, selflessness, and honor, Kęstutis was well-known throughout Western Europe for his humanity, demonstrations of love toward others, and chivalrous behavior.

While Kęstutis focused on defending the western frontier against Crusader attacks, Algirdas devoted himself to the expansion of Lithuania into the eastern and southern lands of Western Rus'.

During Algirdas's reign, Lithuanian forces successfully captured a whole host of territories controlled by Western Rus'. Taking advantage of the clash between the veches and the princes, Algirdas in 1356 annexed the Principality of Chernigov.[103] Almost simultaneously, Algirdas captured the lands of Kamianets-Podilskyi from the Tatars and acquired Kyiv, which had already—under the rule of Gediminas— begun to rely on Lithuania.

This acquisition provoked great hostility from the Golden Horde, since they viewed the Kyiv region as a territory under their control. At the beginning of his reign, Algirdas cautiously avoided serious conflict with the Golden Horde. As soon as the Golden Horde began experiencing internal strife, however, Algirdas began to take decisive military action. In 1362, Lithuanian forces won a decisive victory, defeating three Tatar military leaders during the Battle of Blue Waters. In so doing, Algirdas freed Podolia[104] and the neighboring southern steppes between the Dnieper and Dniester Rivers down to the Black Sea from Tatar control. In the newly annexed Principality of Kyiv, Algirdas established his son, Vladimir, as ruler of the region. In the lands of Kamianets-Podilskyi, Algirdas granted his nephews (the sons of Karijotas, the Duke of Novogrudok) the authority to rule.

The Principality of Smolensk, located between two major political centers in the lands of Rus'— Moscow and Lithuania—was also unable to maintain its sovereignty. Although the Principality of Smolensk was never formally annexed by Lithuania, it relied heavily on the authority of the grand duke of Lithuania (beginning in 1358), even transferring control of its entire western territory (including the cities of Mstislavl and Bilychi) to the Grand Duchy.

As tensions increased and Dmitry Donskoy ascended to the position of grand prince of Moscow, a clash between Lithuania and Moscow became inevitable. The direct cause of this clash was a

conflict that broke out between two rival principalities: Tver and Moscow. Since Uliana of Tver was Algirdas's second wife, it came as no surprise that Algirdas joined forces with Tver to fight against a common enemy: Moscow. Although Algirdas made significant progress in his fight against the Principality of Moscow, even briefly occupying the city of Moscow, his efforts ultimately proved unsuccessful. At the same time, Algirdas attempted to strengthen his positions in Novgorod and Pskov. Although these regions from the time of Gediminas's rule had wanted to unite with Lithuania to avoid being overpowered by Moscow's military forces, Algirdas's efforts were unsuccessful here as well. It was only in 1377, during the final year of Algirdas's life, that the inhabitants of Pskov accepted the authority of Algirdas's eldest son, Andrei.

Despite these difficulties, Algirdas's greatest military challenge was the conflict with Poland over the lands of Galicia-Volhynia. After many years of bloodshed and destruction equally impacting both sides, the conflict was ended peacefully in 1377 through a treaty with King of Poland Louis I of Hungary. As a result, the Brest region and a large portion of Volhynia—namely, the regions of Volodymyr (present-day Volodymyr-Volynsky) and Lutsk—all became Lithuanian territories, while Galicia and the regions of Chełm Land and Belz remained under Polish control.

During his 32-year reign as grand duke of Lithuania, Algirdas greatly expanded the borders of the Grand Duchy into neighboring lands. Lithuania as a result controlled a large territory spanning the area from the Baltic to the Black Sea and from the upper reaches of the Ugra and Oka Rivers to the Western Bug. It is undeniable that Algirdas possessed the same qualities that are characteristic of the most prominent innovators and founders of new political and national movements. Sophisticated yet cautious in politics, resolute in war, an intelligent leader and a clever diplomat, Algirdas

continued his father's work acquiring new lands in Western Rus' and forming a united and powerful Lithuanian nation.

Although Northern Rus' had always been attracted to Moscow, the lands of Southern and Southwestern Rus', constantly under oppressive Tatar rule, were much more closely aligned with Lithuania. By this time, when approximately 90 percent of the lands under Lithuanian control were purely Rus'ian, Lithuania could unquestionably be classified as a Western-Rus'ian nation: the peoples of Rus' accounted for two-thirds of the Grand Duchy's population; Ruthenian was the primary language spoken; and Rus'ian morals and customs were seen as the standard. It was because of this Rus'ian influence that Byzantine culture and Orthodox Christianity entered into Lithuanian tradition. Western culture, primarily developed in the Catholic world, also gained a foothold in Lithuania.

Despite the influence of the Roman Curia,[105] the degree of incorporation of Western culture was relatively small in Lithuania. This phenomenon can be explained by the fact that the only representatives of Western culture in Lithuania were German knights—enemies of the Lithuanian people. Since the widespread adoption of a particular religion by a society is closely related to the existing religious beliefs and social biases of the people, it is understandable that Catholicism, traditionally associated with the adversary, was not at first warmly welcomed by Lithuanians. At the same time, the cultural influence of Rus'ian tradition, far removed from forcing itself upon the peoples of a particular society, was freely accepted by Lithuanians, bringing Lithuania closer to the cultural and political ideologies of Rus'.

It bears mention that when tasked with resolving matters of great importance, such as the establishment and organization of national government authority, Algirdas relied on many of the

political principles established in ancient Rus'. For example, Algirdas incorporated into Lithuanian governance the principle that the authority to rule should be passed down from one generation to the next through dynasties, with each region under the jurisdiction of a different ruling family. Thus, Algirdas rejected the notion of democratically elected rulers, significantly diverging from the Lithuanian tradition of local governance.

This blending of Lithuanian and Rus'ian cultural traditions (although that of Rus' was much more advanced) proceeded so successfully that in two or three generations, by the beginning of the 16th century, a complete fusion of Lithuania with Western Rus' was expected. One issue remained unresolved, however. That issue was who would rule the united lands—the Gediminids or the descendants of Ivan I of Moscow. There is reason to believe that the Gediminids were better equipped to handle this task, as the Lithuanian system of regional rule was slightly more refined than the system used in Rus'.

By placing each region under the control of a local ruler, the grand duke of Lithuania created a lord-vassal relationship through which the local ruler derived his authority in turn from the grand duke, thereby confirming the grand duke's authority as supreme commander of the nation. This system of governance was, in part, responsible for the growth of Lithuania and the centralization of power observed during this period. As a result, Lithuania successfully defended its borders from foreign invasion and acquired new lands in the territory of Rus'.

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103 (In Russian, Черниговское княжество) One of the largest states within Kyivan Rus', for a time this principality on the left bank of the river Dnieper was the second most important after Kyiv.

104 A historical region in Eastern Europe, located in the west-central and southwestern parts of present-day Ukraine and in the northeastern part of what is present-day Moldova.

105 Composed of the administrative institutions of the Holy See and the central body through which the affairs of the Catholic Church are conducted.
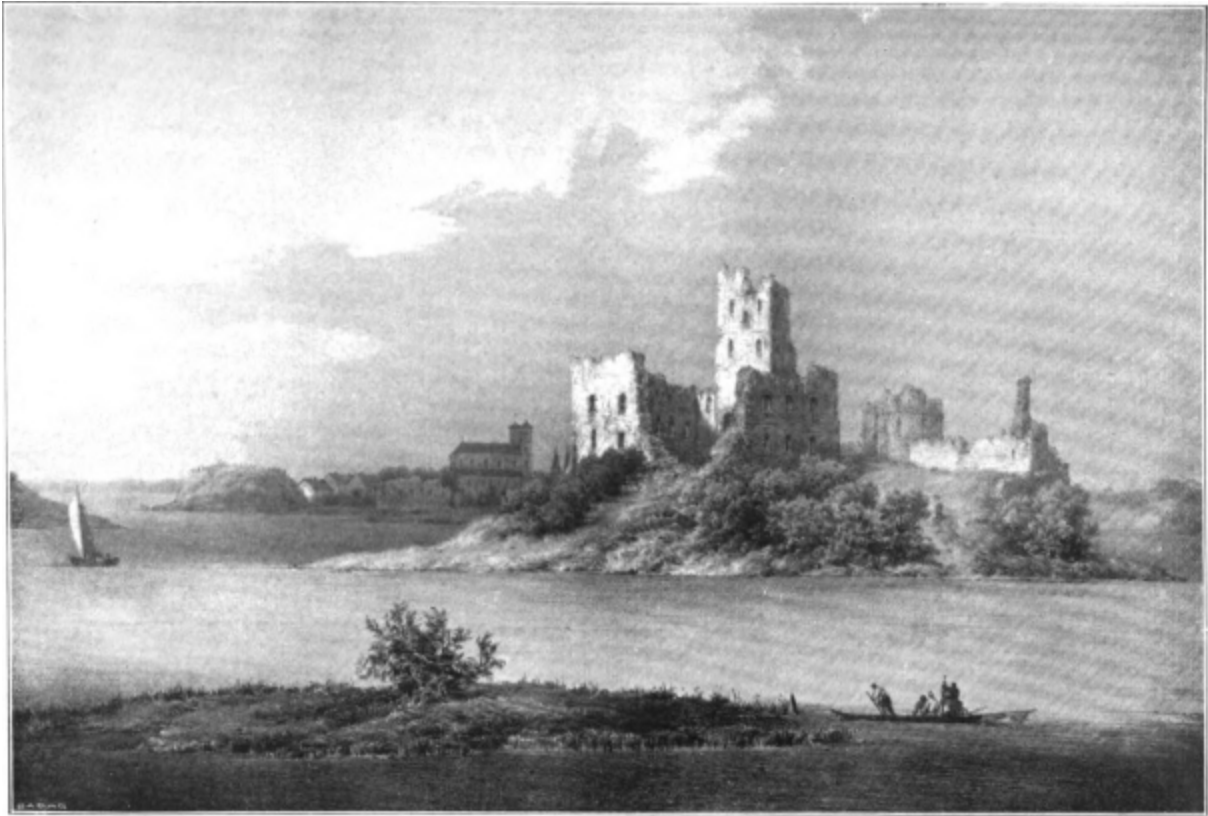
Ruins of the castle in Trakai on Lake Galvabuilt by Grand Duke Kestutis (c. 1297–1382), who governed the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from 1342 to 1382, first together with his brother Algirdas (until 1377) and subsequently with his nephew Jogaila (until 1381).

Chapter 9

The accession of Jogaila[106] to the throne. Relations with Kęstutis. Conflict with Vytautas the Great. Changes in relations between Vytautas, Jogaila, and the Teutonic Order.

After Algirdas's death, one of his 12 sons, Jogaila (r. 1377–1434), ascended to the throne. It was during his rule that Lithuanian history soon changed course. Although Algirdas had divided the large expanse of Lithuanian lands between his sons prior to his death, the seat of the grand duke was still contested. Just as after

Gediminas's rule, this question of inheritance remained relevant after Algirdas's death. Despite being the eldest member of the Gediminid dynasty, Kęstutis respected the will of his deceased brother (Algirdas) and accepted the rule of his nephew, Jogaila, while remaining in the position of duke of Trakai. It is important to note that Algirdas did not appoint the eldest of his 12 sons (Andrei of Polotsk) as the heir to the throne, but instead selected the eldest son from his second marriage—Jogaila.[107]

During his first years as grand duke, Jogaila was relatively inactive. Seeing this as an opportunity for conquest, Moscow acquired various Lithuanian lands, including Severia,[108] along with the cities Trubchevsk and Starodub, thereby subordinating some of Jogalia's own brothers under Muscovite rule. The Teutonic Order, also taking advantage of Jogaila's apparent indifference, invaded Lithuania seven times in 1378 and three times in 1379. Historical sources do not indicate what measures were taken by Jogaila to defend the Grand Duchy; only Kęstutis was recorded as having retaliated against the German knights, by suddenly invading Prussia. Despite his best efforts, Kęstutis did not have sufficient military force to continue his fight against the Teutons. Thus, Kęstutis readily joined the peace negotiations between Jogaila and the Teutonic Order in 1379, not suspecting that these negotiations were actually a cover for a secret coalition against him involving Jogaila and the Livonian Order.[109]

Despite the fact that Jogaila's ascension to the throne was the direct result of Kęstutis's benevolence and generosity, Jogaila soon became irritated by his uncle's involvement in the administration of government and began searching for a way to get rid of him. But prior to taking decisive action, Jogaila first had to evaluate his forces and prepare for battle. Since Jogaila still did not have substantial experience as grand duke, and Kęstutis was well-loved by the

Lithuanian people, Jogaila needed an ally he could rely on for support. Jogaila found this support in one of the Livonian commanders. In 1380, Jogaila entered into a pact with the Livonian Order. The pact provided that the peace between the two parties would not extend to Kęstutis and the lands under his rule.

Later that year, Grand Master of the Teutonic Knights Winrich von Kniprode, Jogaila and his council, Kęstutis's son Vytautas,[110] and Vytautas's adviser Ivan Olshansky all met in Dovydiškės. There, Jogaila and the Teutonic Order secretly entered into an alliance that gave the Teutons free rein to use military force against Kęstutis and his children, denying them the right to rule. This alliance was established in such secrecy that Vytautas not only had no knowledge of it, but even continued to consider Jogaila one of his closest friends. Only when the Teutonic Commander of Osterode Kuno von Liebenstein informed Kęstutis of the secret alliance did Kęstutis have an understanding as to what had transpired. As a result, despite Vytautas's conviction that Jogaila was still a loyal friend, Kęstutis decided to retaliate. Kęstutis quickly invaded Vilnius and captured Jogaila, finding the original copy of the treaty among Jogaila's personal documents. Having deposed Jogaila, Kęstutis ascended to the throne, becoming grand duke of Lithuania. However, he did grant Jogaila the right to rule the lands that his father (Algirdas) had controlled prior to becoming grand duke: Vitebsk and Krewo.

Not long thereafter, when Kęstutis was away on a military campaign against the Prince of Severian Novgorod[111] Kaributas,[112] who did not accept the authority of his uncle Kęstutis, Jogaila and his Teutonic allies attacked Vilnius and Trakai. Unable to defeat Kęstutis in battle, Jogaila tricked Kęstutis and Vytautas into travelling to his military encampment. Upon arrival, the 80-year-old Kęstutis was quickly chained and transported to Kreva Castle,

where in a few days' time, most likely by Jogaila's order, he was strangled to death.

The same fate awaited Vytautas, who was first taken to Vilnius Castle and then to Kreva Castle. At the last second, however, Vytautas was able to escape. Disguised as one of his wife's female servants, Vytautas fled to Slonim and then to Masovia. From there, Vytautas made his way to Marienburg,[113] the capital of Prussia, where he was welcomed by Grand Master of the Teutonic Order Konrad Zöllner von Rotenstein. The grand master agreed to assist Vytautas, entering into a pact that outlined a collaborative effort to counter Jogaila. Adhering to the terms of the pact, Vytautas was baptized into the Catholic faith in 1383. The other terms of the pact stated that if Vytautas was to emerge victorious in his fight against Jogaila, Vytautas was required to grant the Teutonic Order control of a portion of Lithuania proper and of Samogitia in its entirety, and to subordinate himself to Teutonic rule. With these terms agreed to, Vytautas and the Teutonic Order waged a long and bloody war against Jogaila. The war finally ended in 1384 when both sides accepted a peace treaty that granted Vytautas possession of Brest, Drohiczyn, Grodno, Białystok, Surazh, a portion of the lands along the Western Bug River, and—somewhat later—Lutsk.

Afterward, Vytautas suddenly severed all relations with the Teutonic Order, seized Teutonic fortresses in Jurbarkas and Marienwerder, and returned to Jogaila in Lithuania. The reason for such a sudden change in relations between Vytautas, Jogaila, and the Teutonic Order was Jogaila's new attitude toward Poland. This fresh foreign policy would lead to an event that had an immense political impact on Lithuania, dramatically affecting its historical development as a nation.

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106 Later known as Władysław II Jagiełło, after his baptism in 1386, prior to his coronation as king of Poland.

107 Note: According to some historians, the selection of Jogaila as heir to the throne serves as an indication that, in contrast to the widespread belief founded on the descriptions of chroniclers who painted Jogaila in a negative light, Jogaila was truly an intelligent, careful, and remarkable ruler.

108 A historical region encompassing present-day central-west Russia, northern Ukraine, and eastern Belarus.

109 At this time, the Livonian order was an autonomous branch of the Teutonic Order.

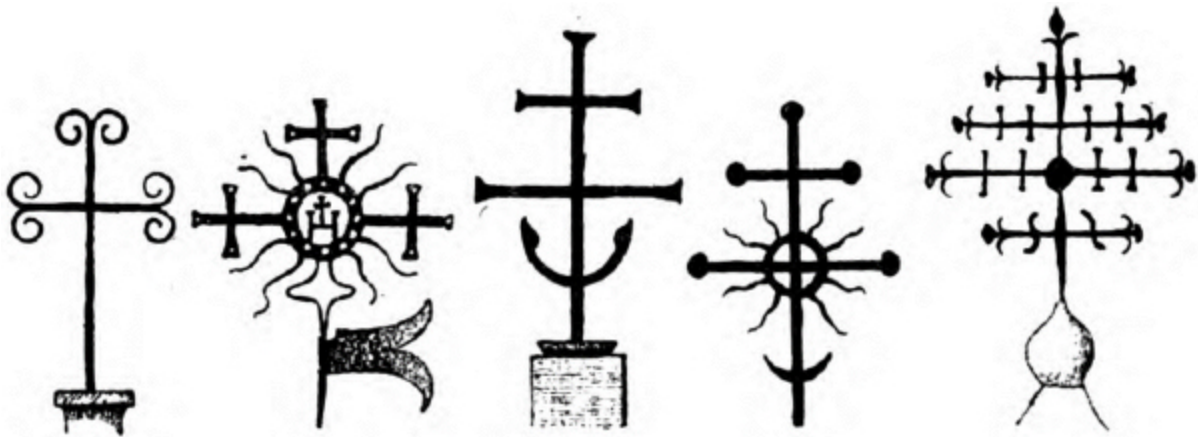110 Later known as Vytautas the Great, grand duke of Lithuania.

111 Also referred to as Novgorod-Siversky.

112 Later baptized as Dmitry, sometimes referred to as Dmitry Korybut.

113 Now known as Malbork.

The Third Era
The Preparation for a Real Union—From 1386 to 1569

Wrought iron crosses of old Lithuania (from de Danilowicz, 1919, p. 20).

Chapter 10

Events in Poland leading up to 1386. The marriage of Jadwiga and Jogaila. The Union of Krewo. The aftermath of the Union. The Christianization of Lithuania. Conflict with Vytautas.

By the end of the 14th century, Poland's internal situation could be summarized as follows: The authority of the king of Poland was substantially restricted by the *szlachta*,[114] a large and powerful social class that in effect governed the nation through its representative bodies (the *sejm*[115] and the *sejmik*). In this way, the interests of the nation corresponded with those of the szlachta. The peasants, stripped of all rights, were completely dependent upon their landlords, living in conditions so harsh that they could be described as slavery. The treasury of Poland, which had to fund

frequent wars against Teutonic invaders, was completely depleted. The tax burden, disproportionately distributed among the Polish population, could not be further increased.

Such was the state of affairs in Poland when, after the death of Louis I of Hungary, a civil war broke out as a fight for the crown. Finally, in 1384, having dismissed all other contenders for the throne, the Poles welcomed the youngest daughter of the deceased king, 14-year-old Jadwiga, as the rightful heir. Shortly thereafter, discussions began with Grand Duke of Lithuania Jogaila regarding a marriage that could unite Lithuania and Poland. The political motivation for such a union was twofold. First, it would give Poland a reliable ally that could assist both in its fight against the Teutons and in the recovery of its land possessions in Pomerania. Second, the szlachta hoped that Jogaila, indebted to the szlachta for their aid in his ascension to power, would further strengthen and expand szlachta privileges. thereby allowing Polish influence over the lands of Western Rus', Volhynia, Podolia, and Ukraine.

The Polish Catholic clergy was also interested in a union with Jogaila, as they saw this as an opportunity to Christianize the entire population of Lithuania. Jogaila, in turn, saw coronation as king of Poland and baptism into the Catholic faith as an opportunity to join forces with Poland, receive support from the Pope in defending his lands from the dangerous Teutonic Order, and conclusively establish himself as grand duke of Lithuania (he was still fighting over this position with Vytautas at this time). Perhaps it was because of this desire to ascend to power in Poland that Jogaila quickly sought to make peace with Vytautas, hoping to turn his principal adversary into a close ally that would reliably defend the nation from Teutonic invasion.

Negotiations concerning the union between Lithuania and Poland and the marriage of Jogaila and Jadwiga began in 1384, as soon as peace with Vytautas was achieved. On February 12, 1386,

Jogaila arrived in Kraków.[116] There, after his baptism into the Catholic faith, he was wedded to Jadwiga, and on March 4, crowned king of Poland under the name Władysław II. Prior to his coronation, however, Jogalia had already signed an official document that was prepared in Vawkavysk by members of the Polish szlachta and Lithuanian-Russian officials.

This document outlined five terms that would have to be adhered to, as a condition of forming the union. First, after marrying Jadwiga, Jogaila had to be accepted as sovereign ruler of both Poland and Lithuania. Second, with the exception of the Samogitians and the peoples of Rus', Jogaila and all his subjects were required to be baptized into the Catholic faith. Third, all diplomatic negotiations involving foreign powers were to be carried out with representatives of both Poland and Lithuania present. Fourth, it was agreed that all military action, including defensive and offensive measures, were to be executed collaboratively. Fifth, the two nations were to remain completely independent with respect to domestic governance: each nation would retain its officials, financial policies, and special military forces. Furthermore, Jogaila was required to pledge to respect all privileges granted to the Polish nobility by previous kings.

In addition to these five terms, the Polish nobility demanded that Jogaila agree to certain obligations that only concerned Poland and made Jogalia's authority to rule directly dependent upon the Polish szlachta. Jogaila was required to only appoint to positions within Poland native Polish officials, who would have to be approved by the Polish szlachta prior to taking office. Jogalia was required to compensate Poland for all expenses incurred during recent military campaigns and domestic battles. He was also obliged to release all Polish prisoners of war held in Lithuania. Furthermore, he was restricted to the collection of only two grosz[117]

from each landowner as tax. Jogalia was also required to abolish the office of the "opravtsy,"[118] which had judicial authority in legal matters. In addition to all these obligations, he also agreed to personally compensate Duke of Austria William with 200,000 florins[119] for terminating William's engagement to Jadwiga and to personally direct the transfer of all valuables owned by Jogalia's father and grandfather from Vilnius to Poland.

The impact and consequences of the Union of Krewo carried significant implications not only for Lithuania, but for all of Eastern Europe. This union was a forced fusion of two largely incompatible and even adversarial nations that was more of an experiment in diplomacy than a well-planned political act founded on common goals and interests. From the perspective of Lithuania, the Union of Krewo was prematurely established in 1386, prompted by a series of random events that reflected rather poorly on Lithuanian history. Poland, however, greatly benefited from this union: not only did it offer protection against Teutonic invasion, but it also breathed new life into a crumbling nation, postponing its decline for another 400 years.

From the very beginning of this union, the influence of Rus' in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was gradually replaced by the influence of Poland, which made its way into Lithuania through a number of different means. For example, the sejm, which was the primary platform used to resolve pertinent issues in both nations, allowed Lithuanian-Rus'ian nobles to interact with Polish nobility, thereby exchanging political ideologies and learning about the customs of Polish government. Furthermore, the various decrees and charters issued by the grand duke of Lithuania (also referred to as "privileges") established the same governmental procedures, rights, and inter-class relations in Lithuania as those that were prevalent in Poland. Thus, the influence of Polish culture, which

was undoubtedly much stronger and better developed than Lithuanian culture, substantially changed the organization of government and social structure in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Additionally, under the influence of Poland, Lithuanian relations with its possessions in Western Rus' took a negative turn: Orthodox believers were persecuted and the peoples of Rus' were oppressed. For this reason, the inhabitants of certain lands in Western Rus' turned to the princes of Moscow for protection, and in turn, were absorbed into the Principality of Moscow. Moreover, the constant internal conflict with Poland, which diverted attention from expansion into the east, greatly facilitated the acquisition of various lands in Western Rus' by Muscovite princes, allowing the Principality of Moscow to grow. After his coronation, King of Poland Władysław II Jagiełło chose Kraków as his permanent residence, leaving his brothers to govern the distinct Lithuanian regions. The capital of Lithuania—Vilnius—however, was not assigned to anyone and a new grand duke was not appointed.[120]

To fulfill the promises that he had made to the people of Poland, King Władysław II Jagiełło and his wife Jadwiga, accompanied by numerous bishops, dukes, and Polish magnates,[121] travelled to Lithuania to begin the process of conversion to the Roman Catholic faith. During a special sejm in Vilnius that convened to discuss the matter of Christianization, it was agreed that all native Lithuanians, of both genders and of all social classes, would be baptized. However, Samogitians, Rus'ians, and those Lithuanians who had already accepted Orthodox Christianity would not be forced to renounce their current beliefs.[122]

To promote the conversion of Lithuanian nobles to the Catholic faith, a privilege was issued that granted a number of important benefits to those who accepted Catholicism. First, they were granted the right to distribute and use their possessions as they saw

fit, and could arrange for their daughters to be married as the parents wished. Second, they were freed from almost all individual obligations. Third, they were assured swift justice under the law. Those who lived in cities were promised Magdeburg rights,[123] while commoners were attracted by the distribution of white cloth garments to the newly baptized. Despite all these efforts by King Władysław II Jagiełło and the Catholic clergy to encourage baptism, at this time only approximately 30,000 Lithuanians were baptized.

It was not long before Lithuanians became unhappy with King Władysław II Jagiełło and Polish rule. Kęstutis's son Vytautas took advantage of this discontent, entering into an alliance with the Samogitians and the Teutonic Order, and beginning a series of military campaigns into Lithuania proper against King Władysław II Jagiełło. In 1392, King Władysław II Jagiełło was pressured to accept Vytautas as the sovereign grand duke of Lithuania. On August 4 of the same year, King Władysław II Jagiełło entered into an official pact with Vytautas in the city of Vilnius, requiring Vytautas to provide military aid to Poland under dire circumstances.

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114 A legally privileged noble class in the Kingdom of Poland and in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

115 The word used in the original Russian is сейм (plural: сеймы), a transliteration of the Polish *sejm* (plural: *sejmy*). Although this term is actually *seĩmas* (plural: *seimaĩ*) in Lithuanian, the editorial decision was made to use the Polish variant in part for consistency (*sejm*, *oblast sejm*, the diminutive *sejmik*, General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and later, General Sejm of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). It is believed that this better illustrates the historical progression from the local seimaĩ to the General Sejm, while at the same time reflecting the reality that Lithuania was the junior, subordinate, partner in the association. During the historical period under discussion, the term sejm refers to large meetings of members of the nobility at which policy decisions were discussed. The first traces of large nobility meetings can be found in the negotiations for the Treaty of Salynas in 1398. The first sejm, however, is considered to have convened in Grodno in 1445 during talks

between Casimir IV Jagiellon and the Council of Lords. The word's meaning as the unicameral parliament of Lithuania, the legislative branch of government, dates from the country's declaration of independence in 1918. For a detailed discussion of the Sejms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and their origins, please see Appendix II.

116 It is important to note that Jogaila signed a document—the Act of Krėva—in Kreva Castle on 14 August 1385, which comprised a series of prenuptial promises. It is from this event, the signing of the Act of Krėva, that the Union of Krewo derives its name. Some historians, however, refer to the events of 1384–1386 collectively as the Union of Krewo.

117 A Polish monetary unit equal to one hundredth of a zloty.

118 The Eastern European equivalent of the English justiciar, opravtsy would detain suspects, conduct investigations, and issue rulings in court, serving in a combined law enforcement and judicial capacity.

119 The florin was a coin produced from 1252 to 1533, containing 3.54 grams of fine gold. Although the purchasing power was variable, according to some estimates, it ranged from 140 to 1,000 modern US dollars. To give some context, during the first half of the 15th century, it is estimated that the annual income for a servant was approximately 10 florins and the annual income for a physician was 60 florins.

120 Note: The widespread belief that Skirgaila was appointed to the position of grand duke of Lithuania is based on a misunderstanding.

121 The magnate social class of wealthy and influential nobility arose around the 16th century, over time gaining increasing influence over Commonwealth politics. Because of the extent of their power and independence, the most powerful among them were known as "little kings."

122 Note: This exception was not followed—there is evidence that certain nobles who did not wish to renounce their Orthodox faith were executed by Jogaila.

123 Note: Magdeburg rights were a special set of town privileges first developed by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I (r. 936–973), based on Flemish law, regulating the degree of internal autonomy within cities and villages, granted by the local ruler. These privileges first appeared in Germany at the end of the 10th century, when the kings of Germany became familiarized with Italian city organization. Otto I established cities on the Saale, Elbe, and Oder Rivers, where merchants would gather to trade. Later, when these cities (e.g., Markrecht, Burgfrieden, and Weichbild) were freed from state rule, they were granted special rights and privileges. City organization during the Middle Ages provided cities with a great level of autonomy, which was guaranteed through individual privileges granted to cities by emperors, kings, and dukes, in exchange for service. It was also not uncommon for these privileges to be obtained by the city community by force. By the beginning of the 13th century,

the full collection of privileges known as Magdeburg rights was issued, based on the *Sachsenspiegel* (the most important law book of the Holy Roman Empire) and ancient German town law. Specifically, Magdeburg rights granted the inhabitants of cities, or burghers, the right to a court composed of the wójt (head of a town) and 12 jurors of their choosing. (This note represents a consolidation of the author's original footnote here and another, more detailed, one, in Chapter 19, as we thought it might be useful to the reader to present more complete background information relating to Magdeburg rights here, earlier in the text.)

Seal of Vytautas the Great (c. 1350–1430), from Wikimedia.

Chapter 11

Vytautas the Great. Vytautas's attempts to abolish the system of local governance in Lithuania. The annexation of Smolensk. The issue of Podolia. The Treaty of Salynas. Military campaigns against the Tatars. Defeat on the Vorskla River and its consequences. The 1401 Pact of Vilnius and Radom. Relations with Moscow and the Teutonic Order. The Battle of Grunwald and its significance for Lithuania. Vytautas's political policy following the Battle of Grunwald.

The events that transpired in 1392 were not representative of a simple transfer of power. Instead, they marked the beginning of a

new era in Lithuanian history. Under the rule of Vytautas the Great, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania reached the pinnacle of its strength and success, moving to the forefront of Eastern European politics. By the end of Vytautas's almost 40-year reign as grand duke, however, the same internal and external conflicts that were produced by the 1386 union with Poland became apparent once again, ultimately leading to the decline of the mighty Lithuanian nation.

Vytautas's first task after becoming grand duke was to abolish the system of local governance in Lithuania. Taking advantage of the discontent among certain local rulers who did not approve of his ascension to the throne and his policies regarding local governance, Vytautas engaged in military conflict with these local rulers. As a result, he placed the lands of Severia and Vitebsk, along with parts of Volhynia and all of Podolia, under his direct control.[124] This was a major step toward the abolition of the system of local rule, thereby uniting all the lands of Lithuania under the authority of a sovereign monarch.

Having settled the score with the unhappy rulers, Vytautas set his sights on the east. Taking advantage of the turmoil in the Principality of Smolensk at this time, he annexed the lands of Smolensk in 1395, leaving one of his deputies there to manage the territory.

Vytautas's vision of expansion and territorial domination led to a misunderstanding with Poland over the lands of Podolia, which were being governed by Lithuanian officials and were under Vytautas's direct control. This dispute was finally resolved in 1395 when a significant portion of Podolia was transferred to the Polish magnate Spytko II of Melsztyn, granting him the same rights as Lithuanian local rulers, and placing him under Vytautas's rule.[125]

The following year, in 1396, Vytautas began intensive preparations for war against the Teutonic knights, who had continued to frequently invade Lithuania. At the same time, however, an event took place along the Volga River within the area governed by the Golden Horde[126] that not only caused Vytautas to abruptly terminate these preparations, but even to negotiate a peace treaty with the Teutonic Order.

The event in question—political upheaval within the Golden Horde and the expulsion by Tamerlane[127] of Khan Tokhtamysh, who fled to Lithuania, beseeching Vytautas to come to his aid—provided Lithuania with the opportunity to play an unprecedented role in foreign affairs. Vytautas entered into an alliance with Khan Tokhtamysh, promising him support from Lithuanian military forces in his struggle to reclaim authority within the Golden Horde, in exchange for Tokhtamysh's aid in Vytautas's fight against Moscow. Planning to fight against the Tatars, Vytautas wanted as few enemies as possible. He therefore entered into a peace treaty on April 12, 1398 with the grand master of the Teutonic Order on the island of Salynas.

The terms of this treaty (commonly referred to as the Treaty of Salynas) were as follows: First, Vytautas was required to actively support the spread of Catholicism in Lithuania. Second, he had to transfer Samogitia to the Teutonic Order. Third, Vytautas was obligated to provide military support to the Teutons with the goal of overtaking Pskov. Fourth, Vytautas and the Teutonic Order agreed not to permit any foreign military forces, including Christian troops, to travel through their respective lands to reach the other party's territory (Lithuania or Prussia).[128] Fifth, the Teutonic Order was required to release Vytautas's brother Sigismund Kęstutaitis, who had been taken hostage by the

Germanic knights in 1391. Sixth, the Teutonic Order promised to assist Vytautas in his conquest of Novgorod.

After signing the Treaty of Salynas, Vytautas's authority was accepted by the inhabitants of Novgord in 1398. Shortly thereafter, Vytautas began a series of invasions into the lands under the control of the Golden Horde. His first military campaign, which began during the summer of 1398, successfully ended in the pillaging of several Tatar settlements, the construction of a fortress at the mouth of the Dnieper River, and the capture of a large number of Tatar troops. Vytautas's second military campaign against the Golden Horde in 1399, however, ended quite differently. In addition to Lithuanian and Rus'ian forces, many Polish nobles and their regiments participated in this campaign. Furthermore, Tatar forces, under the command of Vytautas's ally Tokhtamysh, along with a few hundred Teutonic knights, also aided in the fight. Despite the substantial size of these united military forces, they were no match for the opposition, who terminated this military engagement in their favor with great bloodshed on the banks of the Vorskla River on August 12, 1399.[129]

Having raided the surrounding lands, the Tatar forces, under the command of Edigu,[130] invaded Kyiv and even reached Lutsk. Although these lands were pillaged, the Tatars did not proceed any further, quickly returning to their lands in the steppes. This defeat on the Vorskla River had far-reaching consequences. Neighboring nations, taking advantage of Lithuania's weakened military, began invading Lithuanian lands: Moscow got the upper hand in Novgorod and the Principality of Smolensk temporarily seceded from Lithuania. Furthermore, the Teutonic knights, threatened by war themselves, demanded that Vytautas uphold the provisions to which he had agreed in the Treaty of Salynas. These circumstances placed Lithuania in a very difficult position, forcing Vytautas to set

aside his plans for establishing an independent Lithuanian-Rus'ian state, instead turning to Poland for support.

To this end, a joint meeting between representatives of Lithuanian and Polish nobility was held in Vilnius in 1401.[131] During this assembly in Vilnius, a pact (commonly referred to as the Pact of Vilnius and Radom) was established that validated the alliance between Poland and Lithuania. This pact involved several provisions. First, Vytautas and all members of Lithuanian nobility promised to remain loyal to Poland. Second, Vytautas was granted control of Lithuania for life. Third, in the event of Vytautas's death, the king of Poland and his successors were to be accepted as rightful heirs to the Lithuanian throne, whereas if Jogaila were to die first, the Poles could not elect a new king without the approval of Vytautas and the Lithuanian people. Thus, the 1401 Pact of Vilnius and Radom, a result of Lithuania's temporary military weakness, was the first official document to certify and formalize the political union between Lithuania and Poland, and was also first to establish a precedent for the succession to the Lithuanian throne.

Because of this union with Poland, Vytautas received enough support to be able to resume his military campaigns against Northern and Eastern Rus'. In 1405, Vytautas regained control of the Principality of Smolensk, which subsequently remained under Lithuanian rule for more than 200 years. Vytautas was also able to successfully invade the lands of Pskov, completely pillaging the region. These military campaigns in the lands of Rus' pulled Vytautas into a new conflict with the Grand Prince of Moscow, which was only resolved in 1408 with a peace treaty that was signed on the banks of the Ugra River.[132] Although this peace treaty did not revoke Vytautas's authority to rule over Smolensk, it did prohibit him from interfering in the affairs of Novgorod and Pskov.

The Polish-Lithuanian union did have a significant impact on the closest neighbor and long-time enemy of the two nations: the Teutonic Order. Taking advantage of an insurrection in Samogitia, which had been transferred to the Teutons by Vytautas during his conflict with Władysław II Jagiełło, Vytautas and Władysław II Jagiełło—together with 100,000 troops under their command— invaded the lands of Prussia in June 1410. This insurrection, which constituted a rebellion against the harsh rule of the Teutonic Order, was also caused by a misunderstanding between the Teutons and Poland over the Margraviate of Brandenburg,[133] prompting Poland to participate in the Lithuanian attack, along with Rus'ian military forces and members of the Tatar cavalry.

On July 15, a fierce battle against the Teutonic forces (under the command of Grand Master Ulrich von Jungingen) ensued. After the fight was over, the staggering number of Teutonic casualties made it readily apparent that it was going to be difficult for the Teutonic Order to recover from this defeat.[134] Thus, it was expected that this Prussian-Germanic state was ready to crumble and fall prey to the victors of the battle. Having begun a siege of Marienburg, the capital of the Teutonic state, Władysław II Jagiełło demanded that all the lands of Prussia surrender. The various cities and regions of Prussia, offering little resistance, began surrendering one after the other. The native population, discontent with the rule of the Teutonic knights, was eager to finally be freed.

Both mistakes on the part of Władysław II Jagiełło and the lack of agreement and coordination between the joint military forces quickly became apparent during the siege of Marienburg. What was initially predicted to be an easy victory became a prolonged and difficult military conflict. Grand Master Heinrich von Plauen courageously defended Marienburg, fending off the attackers long enough that the troops of the invading army began to fall ill and

reinforcements from Livonia and Germany were sent. Most impactful, however, were the opposing interests of Vytautas and the Poles. Remembering his previous dreams for an independent Lithuanian state and apprehensive of Poland gaining too much power, Vytautas was the first to leave Prussia, withdrawing his troops without waiting for the fighting to end.

Thus, as Vytautas was heading back to Lithuania, Władysław II Jagiełło was left to fend for himself with only his own Polish troops. As a result, the war dragged on until 1411, when it finally ended with the Peace of Thorn. This peace treaty allowed the Teutonic Order to keep all of its prior land possessions, except for Samogitia, which was transferred to Lithuania, and the lands of Dobrzyń, which were returned to Poland. Despite the apparent decline of the Teutonic state, with its defeat at Grunwald and the Peace of Thorn, Teutonic knights still continued to invade Lithuanian lands. These attacks continued for another 11 years, finally ending in 1422 with the Treaty of Melno.

When evaluating the significance of the Battle of Grunwald, it is important to note that the financial gain of the victors, compared to what could have been won, was rather small. The boost in morale, however, was tremendous. The Battle of Grunwald was among those military engagements that decide the fates of entire nations. The might and reputation of the Teutonic knights were severely damaged. The subduers of weak and isolated Prussian tribes were confronted by the joint forces of three neighboring states from Eastern Europe, before which the cultural traditions of the Teutonic Order served as an inadequate defense. The brotherhood, which was established to fight against pagans, no longer had the resources or motivation for such a struggle—all its strength had faded after the war with the three united Christian nations. From this point onward, the Teutonic Order only had its own funds available to provide for its survival. Having lost its prowess, large throngs of

knights travelling from all the ends of Europe no longer made their journeys to fight for the Teutonic state, as the days of fighting against pagan peoples were clearly over. In this way, the Teutonic Order became aimless and obsolete.

Lithuania's western neighbor was therefore no longer a threat to the Grand Duchy, Lithuania's land possessions expanded with the return of Samogitia—and its neighbors to the east, who also had been decisively defeated, posed no risk to Lithuania. Only Poland, Lithuania's southern neighbor, emerged from this war as a stronger nation. No longer threatened by the Prussian knights, who were close allies with Vytautas against Poland, the Poles benefitted the most from the victory at Grunwald. Although the fall of the Teutonic Order did benefit Lithuania, since the Teutons were an enemy as much as they were an ally, it is certain that Poland gained much more from the victory than did Lithuania. This is because the Teutonic Order, interested in stirring up enmity between Lithuania and Poland, would always support Lithuania, or any other nation unhappy with the Polish king, in armed conflict.

Thus, the last remaining threat to Lithuanian sovereignty turned out to be the neighboring Poles. Vytautas understood this as he withdrew his troops from Prussia prior to the end of the war. From this point onward, Vytautas modified his politics, leading the Grand Duchy in an entirely new direction. The elimination of local rule and the expansion of Lithuanian borders had both been achieved by Vytautas during the first half of his reign. All that was left was to sever ties with Poland and establish an independent state. So it was that beginning in 1410, relations with Poland moved to the forefront of Lithuanian politics.

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124 Note: Vytautas acquired the Principality of Kyiv somewhat later, after the death of Skirgaila.

125 Note: Additionally, it is likely that Vytautas received a monetary reward for this transfer.

126 Also known as Kipchak Khanate, the Russian designation for the Ulus Juchi, the western part of the Mongol empire, which flourished from the mid-13th century to the end of the 14th. The people of the Golden Horde were a mixture of Turks and Mongols, with the latter generally making up the aristocracy.

127 Timur (1336-1405), later Timūr Gurkānī, sometimes spelled Taimur and historically best known as Amir Timur or Tamerlane, was a Turco-Mongol conqueror who founded the Timurid Empire in and around modern-day Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asia, becoming the first ruler of the Timurid dynasty (in-laws of the line of Genghis Khan, founder of the Mongol Empire).

128 Note: This provision was evidently included to target the actions of Poland. Based on the geographic locations of Poland, Lithuania, and Prussia, only Polish troops could travel through Lithuania in order to reach Prussia.

129 Note: The total number of troops on Vytautas's side is estimated to have been 70,000.

130 Also known as Edigey, İdegäy or Edege Mangit (1352–1419), this Turkic Muslim emir of the White Horde founded a new political entity that came to be known as the Nogai Horde.

131 Note: It is understood that Orthodox Christian nobles of Lithuanian Rus' did not participate in this meeting, as their signatures are absent from the 1401 Pact of Vilnius and Radom.

132 Note: The Ugra River was the farthest point east that Lithuania ever reached during any of its military campaigns.

133 A major principality of the Holy Roman Empire from 1157 to 1806 that played a pivotal role in the history of Germany and Central Europe.

134 Note: The Battle of Grunwald was only an additional factor contributing to the downfall of the Teutonic Order. In reality, the major reason for its decline was the outdated nature of the Teutonic Order as a political and religious organization. By this time, the Order's primary interest was not the spread of Christianity, but rather the conquest and acquisition of new territorial possessions. Thus, the Teutonic Order had evolved from a religious to a secular state. Unable to adapt to these changes, the Order lost its justification for existence, and thus, was destined to fall.

Drawings of frescoes at the Trakai Island Castle, construction of which began in the 14th century by Kęstutis and completed around 1409 by his son Vytautas the Great, who died there in 1430 (from de Danilowicz, 1919, p. 46).

Chapter 12

The 1413 Union of Horodło. The consequences of the Union. The separation of the Lithuanian Orthodox Church from the Moscow Metropolitanate. Lithuanian foreign affairs. The Christianization of Samogitia. The 1422 Treaty of Melno. Vytautas's plans to separate Lithuania from Poland. The congresses in Lutsk and Vilnius. Vytautas's domestic policy. The development of commerce. The status of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by the end of Vytautas's rule.

Taking advantage of Lithuania's temporary military exhaustion after its fight against the Teutonic Order and the losses Lithuania incurred during the Battle of Grunwald—in addition to Vytautas's desire to prepare Lithuania for the impending invasion of a newly strengthened Moscow military—the Poles successfully entered into a new union with Lithuania in 1413. During an assembly of Lithuanian and Polish nobility in the city of Horodło (on the banks of the Western Bug River), in the presence of Vytautas and Władysław II Jagiełło, the pact was signed amidst much pomp and circumstance on October 2, 1413, officially recognizing the union between Lithuania and Poland.

The terms of this Union were much more favorable toward Lithuania than those outlined in the 1401 Union of Vilnius. First, if Władysław II Jagiełło or Vytautas were to die without leaving any heirs to the throne, the successor was to be mutually elected by Catholic Lithuanians and representatives of Poland. Second, Catholic Lithuanian nobles were granted the same rights as the Polish szlachta and were also allowed to use Polish coats of arms.[135] Third, Lithuania was to adopt sejms and various administrative positions following the Polish manner of governance. Fourth, the General Sejm was to be assembled to resolve matters concerning both nations.[136]

Such were the main provisions of the Union of Horodło, which abolished the king of Poland's right to automatically ascend to the Lithuanian throne in the event of a vacancy (this right had been established through the Pact of Vilnius and Radom in 1401), thereby balancing the influence of both nations by requiring the collaboration of both sides in the election of a successor. The integration of Lithuanian nobility into the Polish szlachta, the adoption of Polish administrative positions, and the establishment of szlachta sejms in Lithuania[137] all served as a means of bolstering

the influence of the Polish szlachta in Lithuanian domestic affairs, thereby limiting the authority of the grand duke, which had previously been unchecked. Thus, the Union of Horodło firmly ingrained Polish-Catholic influence into Lithuanian society, granting Lithuanian Catholics the same rights as members of the Polish szlachta.

With respect to the regions of Lithuania located in the lands of Rus', Vytautas, who was in continual pursuit of Lithuanian sovereignty, actively tried to remove them from the jurisdiction of the Moscow Church. This was of even greater importance to Vytautas because all donations made to the Lithuanian diocese of the Moscow Metropolitanate went directly to his enemy: Moscow. Thus, Vytautas petitioned Constantinople to establish a separate metropolitanate in Lithuania, even proposing a union between the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Catholic Church under the leadership of the Pope. Unfortunately for Vytautas, both suggestions were ultimately rejected.

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania had reached the height of its glory and power by the 1420s. The influence of the Grand Duchy reached far beyond the borders of Lithuania, extending into Northern and Eastern Rus'. In his will, Grand Prince of Moscow Vasily I Dmitriyevich placed his youngest son under the care and protection of Vytautas. After the death of Vasily I Dmitriyevich, the Princes of Ryazan and Tver began to heavily rely on Vytautas's rule. Intimidated by Lithuania's military prowess, Novgorod and Pskov offered large sums of money to Vytautas in exchange for peace. Vytautas even garnered the respect of the Crimean Tatars, who admired him for his valor and honor.

In order to permanently stop the interference in Lithuanian affairs of the German knights—who criticized the Lithuanian grand duke for supporting paganism in Samogitia—and to quell the separatist movement in Samogitia, Vytautas and Władysław II

Jagiełło began the process of Christianization in Samogitia. As a result of certain historical circumstances, the tribal individualism that was firmly rooted in the lands of Samogitia quickly developed into political individualism. Up to the 15th century, Samogitia was a bastion of Lithuanian nationalism. It readily accepted the authority of the grand dukes whose politics adhered to nationalist ideology (e.g., Kęstutis), while rejecting the rule of the grand dukes whose political policies deviated from strictly national interests (e.g., Mindaugas, Jogaila, and Vytautas).

The grand dukes themselves transferred the lands of Samogitia to the Germans several times, a fact that further increased the divide between Samogitia and Lithuania. By initiating the process of Samogitian Christianization in 1413, Vytautas laid the foundation for a closer relationship between Samogitia and Lithuania proper. The process of Christianization did not come without bloodshed, however, since the people's rebellion was crushed with extreme violence and force. Pope Martin V, who through a papal bull issued in 1418 adopted the inhabitants of Samogitia and prohibited the Teutons from engaging in any military conflict with Lithuania, was informed when the violence had finally ceased.

Vytautas entered into a peace treaty with the Teutonic knights at Lake Melno in 1422. This treaty was quite advantageous for Lithuania: it granted the Grand Duchy access to the Baltic Sea through control of the town of Palanga and divided the land possessions of the Teutonic and Livonian knights, preventing the two Orders from collaborating in military campaigns.

The most important aspect of Vytautas's foeign policy at this time, however, concerned Poland. Vytautas, accustomed to independently ruling his nation, was dissatisfied with the constant interference of Polish officials and the growing influence of the szlachta sejms that increasingly limited his authority. Always striving to separate Lithuania from Poland, so as to establish

Lithuania as a sovereign nation, Vytautas was burdened by his vassal-type standing relative to the Polish crown. Vytautas did not see any benefit to Lithuania from the union with Poland, especially since the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, a nation with a relatively weak cultural background, would not only be forced to take on a secondary role in the union, but also to subordinate itself to Polish rule.

The Masters of the Teutonic Order and Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund, for whom the union between Lithuania and Poland was tremendously unfavorable because it gave the two united nations a significant advantage in foreign affairs, tried to take advantage of Polish-Lithuanian conflicts, interfering in the union whenever the opportunity presented itself. This interference was especially of interest to Sigismund: the holy Roman emperor wanted to prevent Vytautas from forming an alliance with the mutinous Czech Hussites,[138] who received support from Lithuanian Rus' and even offered Vytautas the Czech crown. As a result, Sigismund began encouraging Vytautas to pursue political independence for Lithuania, even suggesting that Vytautas take on the title of "king of Lithuania."

This idea appealed to Vytautas, who actively worked to carry it to fruition, assembling a congress in the city of Lutsk in 1429 to discuss this very issue. Among those in attendance were Vytautas, King of Poland Władysław II Jagiełło, Grand Prince of Moscow Vasily I Dmitriyevich, Metropolitan of Moscow Photius, Bishop of Kraków Zbigniew Oleśnicki, the Khan of Perekop, Masters of the Teutonic and Livonian Orders, and Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund. The congress did not yield the intended results, however, as the Poles rejected Vytautas's proposed change in title, correctly viewing this as a step toward Lithuanian independence from Poland. A second attempt the following year in Vilnius also

proved unsuccessful. Not long after this second congress, Vytautas died on October 27 in his castle in Trakai.

In evaluating Vytautas's rule as grand duke, it is important to note that it was under his authority that Lithuania reached the height of its political and economic prosperity. Under Vytautas's rule, no area of government was left untouched by his reformative vision, since Vytautas had updated the administration of government to meet the requirements of his time. Remaining faithful to his Catholic faith throughout the duration of his life, and wanting to increase the involvement of the lands of Lithuania located in Rus' in the life of Lithuania proper, Vytautas promoted religious tolerance, establishing equal rights for the Eastern Orthodox and Catholic Churches. Seeking to strengthen his sovereignty as a ruler, Vytautas opposed the resistance of the Lithuanian nobility by establishing Magdeburg rights and granting special privileges to landowners, hoping to find support among the residents of cities and small landowners.

Understanding the importance of commerce, Vytautas took advantage of Lithuania's geographic position on the frontier separating Western and Eastern Europe, initiating an intensive development of Lithuanian trade. Lithuania and Western Rus' were historically prominent centers of commerce, with cities such as Kyiv and Polotsk serving as points of linkage between the trade routes connecting the Baltic, Caspian, and Black Seas. Under Vytautas, commerce was the focus of special development and advancement. Many goods traveled through Lithuania to ports along the Baltic coast, including Samogitian amber (valued as much as precious stones), lumber, fish, various furs (e.g., European bison, aurochs, bear, deer, beaver, and fox), hemp, flax, flax seeds, honey, and wax.

Vytautas used every peace treaty with the Teutonic Order—and every pact with Novgorod and Pskov—as an opportunity to expand

Lithuania's trade network and negotiate a better commercial position for the Grand Duchy. Lithuanian ships constantly sailed along the Neman River, transporting salted meats, lumber, furs, and other raw materials. Central to Lithuania's network of trade were the Germans, although commerce was often halted during the frequent wars with the Teutonic Order. After entering into a union with Poland, however, Lithuania began looking for new trade routes that would provide the Grand Duchy with the necessary resources (e.g., weapons and food) to maintain the fight against the Teutons. As a result, the Prussian cities of Königsberg and Danzig were replaced by the Polish cities of Warsaw and Kraków as major points of interest for Lithuanian merchants. Nonetheless, trade with Poland alone could not replace the previous commercial relations with the Germans, because Poland could neither provide all the goods required by Lithuania nor a market for raw materials large enough to meet the sales demands of Lithuanian merchants (Poland itself was also an exporter of raw materials).

Because it was imperative that Lithuanian merchants find new trade routes to engage in commerce with Prussian and Hanseatic cities (e.g., Greifswald and Stettin) while bypassing Königsberg and Danzig, the Lithuanians turned to Riga, which soon became the Grand Duchy's primary center of trade. Commercial activity with the East was carried out through Kaffa (now known as Feodosia) and all trade with Hungary was conducted through Poland. Palanga on the Baltic Sea and Khadjibey (modern-day Odessa, Ukraine) served as major Lithuanian port cities, connecting the Baltic and Black Seas. Novgorod, Pskov, and other Hanseatic cities maintained vigorous commercial activity with Lithuania.

To promote the consumption of domestic products, Vytautas imposed tariffs on imported foreign goods for the first time in Lithuanian history. To enforce these tariffs, a customs outpost nicknamed "Vytautas's bathhouse" was established on the island of

Tavan located on the Dnieper river. Understanding the importance of proper trade routes, Vytautas worked to maintain and develop them: dense forests were cleared, roads were built, and bridges were constructed. Vytautas attracted foreign merchants by issuing special privileges. For example, Hanseatic merchants were granted the right to import and export goods without incurring any customs duties, and were allowed to set up trading posts in trading centers along major trade routes such as Kaunas and Vilnius. Vytautas also granted the Tatars and Jews residing in Lithuania special privileges, thereby further encouraging the development of trade in Lithuania and the formation of a new merchant social class.

In the same way that Vytautas sought to improve Lithuanian domestic and economic policies, the grand duke also was successful in his development of foreign affairs. Vytautas fought hard against Poland, to establish Lithuania as a completely independent, sovereign nation—and against Skirgaila, who intended to ascend to the Lithuanian throne and implement the Rus'ian style of local government rule in the lands of the Grand Duchy. For Moscow, Novgorod, and Pskov, Vytautas served as a formidable neighbor who displayed the magnitude of his power on more than one occasion. For the Tatars, Vytautas was a victor in the lands of the steppes. For the Tatar Khans, Vytautas was an ally who could be relied upon for defense. Prussian and Livonian knights were crushed by Vytautas's military might, while Holy Roman Emperor Sigismund, seeing Vytautas's strength as a ruler, respected Vytautas's authority.

Although Vytautas's power was great, his plans were even greater: certain historical sources indicate that Vytautas intended to subdue Pskov, Novgorod, and even Moscow, while others show that he intended to acquire Poland and Prussia, thereby forming a colossal Lithuanian-Slavic state. With Vytautas's death, Lithuania undoubtedly lost its most important historical figure, a remarkable

diplomat and extraordinary leader. Having abolished the system of local rule and established Lithuania as a formidable nation while pursuing his dream of national sovereignty, Vytautas delayed the final union between the Grand Duchy and Poland for another 150 years. Despite Vytautas's best efforts, however, the events that transpired in 1569 were destined to occur, leading to the ultimate downfall of Lithuanian national sovereignty.

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135 Note: To this end, prominent Lithuanian noble families were integrated into Polish families that had already developed their own heraldry in the style of Western European knighthood.

136 Note: Polish-Lithuanian sejms never became fully established at this time, rarely convening while this Union was in effect.

137 Note: Both in Poland and Lithuania, sejms were a completely secular organization consisting entirely of representatives of the nobility. Although the clergy also participated in the sejms, they attended as members of the nobility, rather than as representatives of the Church.

138 Members of the Czech Proto-Protestant Christian movement that followed the teachings of the reformer Jan Hus, the best-known representative of the Bohemian Reformation.

The sale of the Castle of Marienburg in 1457 to King Casimir IV (Ludwig Rosenfelder, 1854).

Chapter 13

Švitrigaila. Sigismund Kęstutaitis. The 1432 Union of Grodno. Sigismund's struggle against Švitrigaila. Casimir IV Jagiellon. The status of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the first half of Casimir's rule. The election of Casimir IV Jagiellon to the Polish throne. The strengthening of Moscow. Lithuanian-Rus'ian Sejms and the factors that led to their establishment. The Privileges of 1447 and 1457. Casimir IV Jagiellon's Legal Code of 1468. A general characterization of Casimir's rule.

After Vytautas's death, Władysław II Jagiełło was pressured by the Lithuanian-Rus'ian faction to accept his brother, Švitrigaila (r. 1430–1432), as grand duke of Lithuania. After ascending to the Lithuanian throne, Švitrigaila immediately proclaimed his intent to

separate Lithuania from Poland. As a result, relations between Poland and Lithuania became quite hostile. Following Poland's invasion of Podolia and Volhynia, this hostility turned into warfare. The military campaigns, which Švitrigaila successfully led in conjunction with the Teutons, ended in 1431 with the signing of a peace treaty. This treaty allowed both sides to retain their previous land possessions.

To deter future military conflict, and to establish a permanent peace treaty between the two sides, a special congress was scheduled to assemble in 1432 in the city of Parczew. Švitrigaila, however, never showed up. Unable to establish good relations with Švitrigaila, Polish officials organized an insurrection in Lithuania. Relying on the support of the Lithuanian nobility—who were displeased with Švitrigaila's excessive concern for the lands of Rus' under Lithuanian control—Vytautas's brother, Sigismund Kęstutaitis, invaded the city of Ashmyany, where Grand Duke Švitrigaila was staying, and took control of Lithuania. Barely escaping Sigismund's attack, Švitrigaila fled to the lands of Rus' under Lithuanian control, where he remained for approximately six years.

After ascending to the Lithuanian throne, Sigismund (r. 1432–1440) entered into a treaty with Poland in 1432. The treaty outlined the terms for permanent peace between the two nations and renewed the Polish-Lithuanian union established under Vytautas, once again subordinating Lithuania to Polish rule. The Union of Grodno involved several provisions. First, after Sigismund's death, control of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was to be transferred to the Polish king and his sons Władysław III and Casimir. Second, Lithuania was to renounce all claims to lands in the region of Podolsk. Third, the lands of Volhynia were to remain under Sigismund's control for the remainder of his rule, after which they would be transferred to Poland. After King Władysław II Jagiełło

died in 1434, his oldest son—ten-year-old Władysław III—ascended to the Polish crown. Taking advantage of the new king's young age, the royal council, headed by Bishop of Kraków Zbigniew Oleśnicki, assumed control of the government.

In order to ensure that Švitrigaila would never ascend to the Lithuanian throne, the Polish royal council encouraged Sigismund to renew military conflict with Švitrigaila, supporting Sigismund with substantial financial and military aid. This military conflict finally ended with a battle on the Šventoji River, near Wilkomierz (the present-day city of Ukmergė). During this battle, Švitrigaila's forces were completely defeated. Švitrigaila, however, fled south where he proclaimed himself Duke of Kyiv, Volhynia, and Podolsk. Having secured his position as grand duke, he submitted himself to the command of Polish authority and persecuted Švitrigaila's supporters, but Sigismund began to encounter growing opposition to his rule from the Lithuanian nobility. This opposing faction took decisive action against Sigismund in 1440 when the brothers Czartoryski—Voivode of Vilnius Daugirdas and Voivode of Trakai Leliušas—conspired to assassinate Sigismund.

Sigismund's death was followed by intense political turmoil in Lithuania. The conspirators, together with the opposing faction, immediately proclaimed Švitrigaila grand duke of Lithuania. On his way to Vilnius, however, Švitrigaila was delayed in Lutsk. This delay provided Sigismund's supporters, led by Duke Jurijus Olshanski, with enough time to gain strength and take action. They successfully assembled a congress of prominent Lithuanian nobles to elect a new grand duke. The vote was split, however: some favored Sigismund's son Michael Žygimantaitis, while others preferred King of Poland Władysław II Jagiełło, and a third faction favored Švitrigaila. After a lengthy debate, it was decided that Jogaila's son, Władysław II Jagiełło, would be invited to assume the Lithuanian crown.

Władysław II Jagiełło, who had just been elected king of Hungary, was in a hurry to arrive in Hungary, however, to establish himself there as the new king. For this reason, he dispatched his 14-year-old brother, Casimir, to Lithuania as a deputy to govern in his absence. Upon Casimir's arrival in Vilnius, the Lithuanian nobility decided to present a different alternative to Władysław II Jagiełło's proposed plan. Understanding that Casimir's rule as a deputy of the Polish king would threaten Lithuania's sovereignty, the Lithuanian nobility asked that Casimir accept the title of grand duke of Lithuania and swear to never transfer the Principalities of Volhynia, Podolia, and Kyiv to Poland. Having accepted these terms, the crown of Gediminas was in 1440 bestowed upon Casimir, who then ascended to the Lithuanian throne.

At first, the rule of Casimir (r. 1440–1492) could not be characterized as calm and peaceful. Intending to divide the lands of Lithuania between four separate dukes and contenders for the Lithuanian throne, the Poles sought to fragment the Grand Duchy, thereby weakening it enough to allow for Polish annexation of Lithuania. The Samogitians, having elected Michael Žygimantaitis as their own leader, expressed their desire to separate from Lithuania. Simultaneously, a rebellion was initiated in Smolensk. Casimir, however, quickly and successfully ended the rebellion in Smolensk. He also quelled the separatist movement in Samogitia. Thus, Lithuania entered into a relatively peaceful period in its history.

Meanwhile, King of Poland Władysław II Jagiełło had been killed near Varna in 1444 during a military campaign against the Turks. Intending to recoup their loss of Hungary, which had elected Albert the Magnanimous as successor to Sigismund—and to renew close relations with the Grand Duchy through a personal union— the Poles offered the Polish crown to Casimir. Despite the protests of the Lithuanian nobility, who strongly disapproved of any union

with Poland, Casimir, pressured by the Poles, who threatened to elect Duke of Masovia Bolesław IV to the Polish throne, accepted the offer and was crowned king of Poland in Kraków in 1447 with the name Casimir IV. From this point onward, Casimir's attention was mostly focused on matters concerning the Polish-Lithuanian state.

Over the course of multiple sejms, the Poles demanded that the 1413 Union of Horodło be fully reinstated and that Volhynia and Podolia join the Polish-Lithuanian state.[139] The Lithuanians, however, bravely defended the sovereignty of the grand duke. As a result, both Lithuania and Poland were in a continual state of domestic conflict. This period was characterized by the frequent assembly of Polish-Lithuanian Sejms (e.g., the Lublin, Parczew, Sieradz, and Piotrków Sejms), which convened with the intent of making peace between the two polarized nations, so as to reach an agreement about the future of the Polish-Lithuanian state. Unfortunately, these Sejms were unsuccessful in producing any constructive outcomes. Only a new war between Poland and the Teutonic Order temporarily distracted the feuding nations from their internal turmoil.[140]

At the same time, Grand Prince Vasily II of Moscow, who intended to acquire new lands in the region of Rus' to expand the Grand Principality of Moscow, began taking action against Lithuania. These actions took the form of interference in Lithuanian domestic affairs and fueling the turmoil within the Grand Duchy. Hostile relations between Moscow and Lithuania began with Moscow's annexation of Novgorod. This development, which directly impacted the Grand Duchy's territorial possessions, was extremely significant: after the acquisition of Novgorod, the Grand Principality of Moscow became substantially stronger. Having expanded its frontier to the Lithuanian border, it threatened the

Lithuanian state. The Grand Principality of Moscow was so powerful that many neighboring territories willingly accepted the authority of the grand prince, without any coercion on the Moscow's part.

It is important to note that other factors also contributed to this phenomenon. In order to strengthen dynastic ties between Lithuania and Poland, Polish government officials and clergy began intense Catholic missionary campaigns in the lands of Orthodox Lithuanian Rus'. These missionary efforts reached their height under Casimir's rule, around the middle of the 15th century. It was not surprising that the Orthodox Christian population of Lithuania strongly resisted these efforts. As a result, by the end of the 15th century, various Orthodox Christian princes and dukes of Lithuania and Rus' began pledging their allegiance to the Grand Prince of Moscow.[141]

To counteract Moscow's offensive, and to attract the Orthodox Christian nobles of Rus' to Lithuania, Casimir enacted a privilege in 1447 that granted the same rights to Orthodox Christians as those already enjoyed by Catholics. Additionally, Casimir renewed the plan to separate the Western Orthodox Church from the Moscow Metropolitanate. Because Moscow did not desire to wage war against Lithuania, it instead successfully incited the Crimean Tatars to take military action. In the 1480s, the Crimean Tatars began attacking the southern borders of the Grand Duchy. Not long thereafter, in 1482, the Crimean Khan Meñli I Giray acquired Kyiv, imprisoning many of the inhabitants. In 1492, the Tatars completely cleared out the area between Kyiv and Chernigov. By the end of 1492, Moscow finally took overt military action against Lithuania: Moscow's military forces crossed the border into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, torched the cities of Mtsensk and Lyubutsk, and temporarily acquired the cities of Khlepen' and Rahachow.

Moscow's aggressive approach to foreign policy was further developed after Casimir's death in 1492, followed by the succession of Casimir's son, Alexander Jagiellon, to the Lithuanian throne.

Lithuania's struggle against the growing Grand Principality of Moscow and the Tatars not only involved the lands of Lithuania proper, but also many regions of Rus' that comprised the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In this way, the Grand Duchy was at risk of losing all land possessions in Rus', as the lands of Rus' were offered the opportunity to integrate into the Grand Principality of Moscow. Although cultural and religious traditions would have been better supported by Muscovite rule, the lands of Rus' were cautious to jump at this opportunity, using the integration of Novgorod as an example of how the rights and freedoms once freely enjoyed under the rule of the Lithuanian grand duke could become limited under Muscovite rule. In Lithuania, the struggle against Moscow and the Tatars became a point of national unity that promoted decisive action on the battlefield and increased participation in General Sejms, which conspicuously characterized this period.

It was at this time that proper organization of national forces, as well as unanimity and decisiveness in all government matters, was required more than ever to ensure the survival of the Lithuanian state. To successfully fight Moscow, it was imperative that all the lands of the Grand Duchy unite and elect a leader who would represent the common interests of every region. Furthermore, it was necessary to increase taxes and fees to fund the military. Finally, unable to succeed on its own, the Lithuanian-Rus'ian state required the aid of other nations that could help fight off such a formidable opponent. Prior to the permanent establishment of autocracy in the Lithuanian-Rus'ian state, all these matters were discussed on a regional level during assemblies of the local sejms, with each region producing a resolution that favored its own, local, interests. After the clash between Lithuania and Moscow, however,

this fragmentation came to an end: since agreement across all regions was required in resolving these matters concerning the defense of Lithuania, General Lithuanian-Rus'ian Sejms were established.

These Sejms were approved by Casimir's Privilege of 1447, which applied the rights and freedoms enjoyed by the Polish szlachta and Lithuanian Catholic nobility (Lithuanian Catholic nobles were granted these rights during an assembly of the General Sejm in Horodło) to Orthodox nobles as well. The Privilege of 1447 had a significant impact on the development of social and political structure in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. According to the Privilege, Lithuanian landowners were granted the same rights as Polish landowners in the ownership of private lands and exemption from all taxation, save for a few trivial fees that served less of a financial purpose and more of a symbolic subordination to the Lithuanian grand duke. Additionally, the peasantry was excluded from judicial oversight by the grand duke and was instead placed under the jurisdiction of the local landowner. Furthermore, peasants were no longer allowed to migrate from privately owned lands to government lands and back. These changes established the same rules for Lithuanian peasants as those existing in Poland since the 14th century.

Another privilege, issued in 1457, which reaffirmed the rights and freedoms of the Lithuanian nobility that had already been established, also delineated a wide range of new benefits. Among those that were most significant were the following: (1) individuals would no longer be punished for a crime solely based on an official complaint or suspicion without a trial in court (this change was made based on Polish customs and the freedoms enjoyed by Polish citizens) and (2) collective punishment was abolished—"no one would have to answer for someone else's wrongdoing, not the wife for the husband's, not the husband for the wife's, not the son for

the father's, not the father for the son's, not the servant for the master's, if they did not commit the crime." Thus, the nobility of Lithuanian Rus' were awarded the same rights and freedoms that the Polish szlachta enjoyed. More importantly, the nobility of Lithuanian Rus' gained more power within the government of the Grand Duchy, ruling with great authority over the peasantry, who lived on privately owned lands, and playing an active and influential role in legislation, the courts, and government administration.

The formulation of Casimir IV Jagiellon's Legal Code of 1468 was the first attempt to codify the wide assortment of Lithuanian legal customs, aligning those customs with the decrees, charters, and privileges issued by the Lithuanian grand dukes over the years, systematically compiling them into a single collection that could serve as a guide in legal matters. The Legal Code, ratified by the Lithuanian Sejm, was of national significance. Its content—laws and the judicial process—gave special attention to theft of various forms.[142] Although the Legal Code takes a private law stance on crime, such as damage inflicted upon a separate entity, there is evidence within the text of the development of a public law perspective.[143] The punishments prescribed by the Legal Code were quite harsh, with frequent use made of the gallows.

The period of Casimir's rule can be characterized as an era of increasing domestic conflict and contradiction within the Lithuanian state. Understanding the negative consequences of a direct union with Poland, Lithuania, as a result of the adoption of Polish customs and the modification of Lithuanian social structure to more closely match that of Poland, progressively became more reliant on Polish influence, steadily heading in the direction of a close political union with Poland. Meanwhile, the growth and strengthening of Moscow, which became the focal point of Rus' by

the end of the 15th century—together with Poland's increased Catholic missionary activity in the lands of Lithuanian Rus'—resulted in the loss of various lands of Rus' that had previously been in the possession of Lithuania. Ultimately, this served as an early indication of Lithuanian decline, which would become much more apparent under the rule of Alexander Jagiellon.

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139 Note: During the 1448 Lublin Sejm, the Poles requested that Lithuania become part of the Kingdom of Poland under the same terms accepted by the lands of Kraków, Sandomierz, and others when they were incorporated into Poland.

140 Note: In Prussia, soon after the Battle of Grunwald, German cities and secular landowners began protesting the harsh rule of the Teutonic Order, which imposed high fees and taxes across its lands and tightly regulated city commerce. By the end of the 14th century, secular knights and large cities that were centers of commerce formed the Prussian Confederation to bolster and defend their rights. When the Pope and Holy Roman Emperor declared their support for the Teutonic Order, the Prussian Confederation turned to Casimir in 1454, requesting to be accepted as subjects under his rule. As a result, Poland declared war on the Teutonic Order, which ended in 1466 with the Peace of Thorn. As a result of this treaty, the Teutonic Order transferred the lands of Chełmno and Pomerania, along with the cities of Marienburg, Danzig, and Elblag (previously referred to as Elbing by the Tuetons) to Poland. Although the eastern region of Prussia and its capital Königsberg remained under Teutonic control, after the Peace of Thorn, it entered into a vassal-type relationship with the Polish Crown, subjugated to Polish rule.

141 Note: Among those who allied with the Grand Principality of Moscow under Casimir's rule were the princes of Vorotynsk, Belyov, and Odoyev.

142 Note: Of the 26 articles contained within the Legal Code, 19 are concerned with theft.

143 Note: A thief could not, under absolutely any circumstances, be released from the punishment to which he was sentenced.

Alexander Jagiellon (1461–1506), elected grand duke of Lithuania on the death of his father in 1492 and king of Poland on the death of his brother John I Albert in 1501, by Jan Matejko (from AllPainters.ru).

Chapter 14

Alexander Jagiellon. Relations with Moscow. The election of Alexander Jagiellon to the Lithuanian throne and the 1501 Union of Mielnik. The 1503 peace treaty with Moscow. The aftermath of Alexander Jagiellon's

rule and the factors leading to the weakening of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

After Casimir's death, the nobility of Lithuanian Rus'—aware of Poland's intention to elect John I Albert to the Lithuanian throne and hoping to prevent the restoration of a personal union with Poland—quickly proclaimed John I Albert's younger brother, Alexander Jagiellon (r. 1492–1506), as the new grand duke of Lithuania, thereby temporarily gaining independence from the Polish crown. The Rus'ian faction, led by Michael Glinski,[144] played a central role in the election of Alexander to the Lithuanian throne. In fact, because Glinski made the correct political move by supporting Alexander (not discounting his own talents and education), he was immediately offered a prominent position in Alexander's court, where he exercised considerable influence over the grand duke's policies. Cognizant of the threat to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania posed by Moscow's annexation of the lands of Rus' previously under Lithuaninan control, Glinski worked to highlight the importance of the Rus'ian faction in Lithuanian government and promote positive relations with the Rus'ian regions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

At this time, Grand Prince of Moscow Ivan III Vasilyevich, together with Crimean Khan Meñli I Giray, initiated a coordinated attack on Lithuania. By 1493, they had already captured the Lithuanian cities of Mtsensk, Lyubutsk, Khlepen', and Rahachow, among others. Unable to defend the Grand Duchy from Moscow's troops through military action, the Lithuanian-Rus'ian government officials resorted to another tactic. To prevent any future attacks by Ivan III Vasilyevich, they arranged for Alexander to marry Ivan III Vasilyevich's daughter Elena. Agreeing to this, Ivan III Vasilyevich intended to influence the Lithuanian state through his descendants and establish a direct path to the acquisition of the Rus'ian regions

of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In reality, however, it quickly became apparent that Ivan III Vasilyevich had overestimated Elena's influence. Thus, familial ties did little to deter Ivan III Vasilyevich's future attacks on Lithuania, leading to the Battle of Vedrosha and the annexation of several lands in the regions of Smolensk and Chernigov.

Meanwhile, Polish King John I Albert had died in Thorn. Alexander, understanding that a revived Polish-Lithuanian union was the only way to bolster the Grand Duchy's military strength and successfully defend against Moscow's attacks, decided to pursue the Polish crown. His petitions successful, he was elected the new king of Poland during an assembly in Piotrków in 1501. Prior to his coronation, Alexander confirmed the 1501 Union of Mielnik, intended to achieve a political unification of Lithuania and Poland. The Union of Mielnik included several provisions. First, Lithuania and Poland would permanently unite under a single ruler. Second, this ruler would be elected through a joint assembly of Lithuanian and Polish delegates via the General Sejm. Third, Lithuanian Catholic nobles would be granted the same rights as their Polish counterparts. Fourth, a general parliament would legislate for both nations, except in matters concerning the judicial system.[145]

The 1501 Union of Mielnik gave Alexander the opportunity, through the combined efforts of the Lithuanian and Polish military forces, to halt Moscow's expansion into Lithuanian Rus'. Alexander even entered into a peace treaty with Moscow. Although Alexander was required to cede control of a large number of lands in the Smolensk and Chernigov regions—including the cities of Chernigov, Starodub, Putyvl', Rylsk, Novgorod-Seversky, Mosalsk, Gomel, Lyubech, Pochep, Bryansk, Mtsensk, Serpeysk, and Toropets —he was able to retain Smolensk and Kyiv. Relations with Ivan III

Vasilyevich did not improve much after this treaty, however, and it quickly became apparent that Moscow was not planning on ending its aggressive military campaigns into Lithuanian Rus'. Instead, Moscow began actively gathering troops to engage in a renewed fight with Lithuania.

In summary, Alexander's rule can be characterized as unfortunate for Lithuania. Under Alexander's rule, Lithuania incurred the greatest loss of land possessions in its entire history. Alexander's personal characteristics, however, are not at fault for this, as the true reason for these losses is far more complex. The clash between Lithuania and Moscow at the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th century was not an isolated occurrence. Rather, it was the manifestation of a deeper historical trend that is best described not as a fight for life, but a fight for death. This lengthy fight, the goals of which were determined from the very start, continued over multiple centuries and ended with the annexation by Moscow of the various principalities in Western Rus'.

Undoubtedly, the Polish-Lithuanian union exerted tremendous influence over the outcome of this fight. While the socio-political conditions in Lithuania, owing to the union with Poland, became increasingly anarchic, disordered, and less tolerant of free religious expression, the Grand Principality of Moscow saw a flourishing of unity, order, internal strength, and national power, as a direct result of its successful centralization of government. This allowed the grand princes of Moscow, beginning with Vasily II, to pursue expansionary military campaigns into the lands of Lithuania, repeatedly defeating Lithuanian forces in battle, successfully acquiring one region after another in the lands of Lithuanian Rus'.

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144 A prominent nobleman, military commander, and government official, Michael Glinski (1460s–1534) served the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the

late 15th and early 16th century.

145 Note: Certain Polish lawyers consider the 1501 Union of Mielnik to be the final and most decisive union of Lithuania with Poland, referring to this new joint state as the *Rzeczpospolita* (Republic/Commonwealth). This name, however, was not officially recognized by the Sejm in 1501. It was only after the 1569 Union of Lublin that the name was officially adopted.

Michael Lvovich Glinski (1460s–1534), a formerly wealthy and powerful noble of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, whose niece Elena Glinskaya had him sent to prison in August 1534, where he died of starvation (Wikidata.org).

Chapter 15

Sigismund I. Michael Glinski and the attempt of Western Rus' to separate from Lithuania. The reasons for the attempt's failure. War against Moscow. Sigismund's clash with the szlachta. The clash between the lesser szlachta and the magnates. The Lithuanian Statute.

Alexander's successor to the Lithuanian throne, Casimir's youngest son Sigismund (r. 1506–1548), was elected by the nobility of Lithuanian Rus' led by Michael Glinski without any input from Poland. This rush to elect a new grand duke can be explained by the

Lithuanian-Rus'ian nobility's desire to cut political ties with Poland. The Poles, however, recognized Lithuania's aims of independence and responded by electing Sigismund to be king of Poland. This was done during the Piotrków Sejm, a few days after Sigismund was elected grand duke of Lithuania. It was at this time that Grand Prince of Moscow Vasili III offered Poland and Lithuania to join the Grand Principality of Moscow. Although Poland and Lithuania would have to accept the grand prince's supremacy, the two nations would still retain their independence and Catholic faith. This offer, which was made after Sigismund's election, was ultimately declined, resulting in renewed hostility between Lithuania and Moscow.

Meanwhile, an internal conflict within the Grand Duchy began growing, incited by the grand prince of Moscow and Michael Glinski. Glinski, who had fallen out of favor with Sigismund, intended to separate Lithuania's land possessions in Rus' from the Grand Duchy. This attempt to secede, however, was not supported by the people of all lands of Rus' belonging to the Grand Duchy. Glinski encountered indifference and even resistance in the lands of Northwestern Rus', for example, which were responsible for providing the principal military force for the region. The landed gentry, the social class of lesser landowning nobles obligated to provide military service to the Grand Duchy, were the primary inhabitants of Northwestern Rus'. Since the landed gentry had grown accustomed to the various social class benefits they enjoyed as a result of the union between Lithuania and Poland, it was not surprising that Glinski encountered resistance in this region, as a transition to rule by Moscow could potentially result in the loss of these class privileges and limit the influence that the landed gentry had on government affairs.

Glinski's plan to turn Lithuanian Rus' against Lithuania proper and bring Lithuanian Rus' under the grand prince of Moscow's rule

was thus ultimately unsuccessful, ending the final attempt of Lithuanian Rus' to secede from the Grand Duchy. It is evident that the upper social classes that Glinski represented were powerless in this struggle. The ideology of regional sovereignty was outdated—no longer representing the interests of the general population—and failed to motivate the people to fight for secession. The upper nobility was rendered powerless in this struggle, unable to overcome the indifference and conflicting interests of the other social classes. Thus, the first struggle between Western Rus' and Polish influence failed. But deep within the lands of Kyiv, new social forces were gaining strength while preparing for a renewed fight that would turn out to be highly successful.

This turmoil can be explained, in part, by the fact that Sigismund's war against Moscow ended without a decisive victory for either side. During this war—after capturing Smolensk, Mstislavl, Krychaw, and Dubrowna—Vasili's forces experienced a crushing defeat in 1514 in the lands of Orsha, causing Moscow to enter into a five-year peace treaty with Lithuania in 1522. This treaty, which returned all captured lands to Lithuania, allowed Moscow to retain only Smolensk. The truce was extended in 1526 for an additional seven years, in 1537 for five, and for another five years in 1542. In accordance with the treaty of 1537, in exchange for Sebezh and Zavoloch'ye, Lithuania ceded control of Gomel to Grand Prince of Moscow Ivan IV.[146]

The domestic conditions within the Grand Duchy during Sigismund's reign contributed significantly to the negative outcome for Lithuania during the war against Moscow. This internal situation could be characterized by both the clash between the grand duke and the Lithuanian-Rus'ian nobility (the latter calling for an expansion of szlachta rights and the ability to participate in sessions of the General Sejm) and the clash between the lesser

szlachta and the upper levels of nobility. Because many nobles had been granted ownership of various lands by previous grand dukes, a large number of landowners were exempt from taxation, a fact that had an immense impact on the Grand Duchy's treasury. During the Sejm of 1535, Sigismund issued a decree that called for a review of szlachta rights to land ownership and was also designed to ensure that these rights corresponded to those outlined within the Crown Metrica.[147] Furthermore, Sigismund called for a general audit of all szlachta rights and statutes, reinstating certain taxes that had previously been eliminated by his predecessors.

Already engaged in a struggle with Sigismund I, the future of the szlachta as a social class was further challenged by conflicting interests between magnates and the lower levels of the szlachta. These conflicting interests, already apparent by the end of the 15th century and further exacerbated under Sigismund's rule, arose from the hereditary szlachta's aims to gain the same rights as those enjoyed by the magnates. It is important to note that the hereditary szlachta was backed in its endeavors by Poland.

Because of this political support, the status of the lesser szlachta approached that of the magnates and was secured by the legal code of the Grand Duchy, the Lithuanian Statute, during the 16th century. The basis for this legal code—which served as a manual for the judges of Lithuania, providing specific guidance concerning the correct administration of justice, in contrast to the prior ambiguity of customary law—was established under Sigismund I through the compilation of the Statute of 1529. In addition to the sheer necessity of codifying the laws of Lithuania, which were based on a wide assortment of old customs and new charters and privileges issued by the grand dukes of Lithuania, the newly strengthened szlachta's desire to free itself from the constraints of the grand duke's authority significantly contributed to the compilation of the Statute.

The idea of codifying the laws of Lithuania was officially formulated during the Vilnius Sejm of 1514. The members of this Sejm presented this idea to the grand duke as a condition for the continuation of the war against Moscow, a war that, at this point, had become extremely intense. It was in this historical context that the first edition of the Lithuanian Statute (also referred to as the "First Statute") was published in Ruthenian in the year 1529. It was this Statute that provided a unified legal code and codified the feudal customs that had been established many years earlier, especially those focusing on relations between members of the upper levels of society. That being said, the Statute also caused a deep divide in Lithuanian society between the szlachta and the unprivileged lower social classes.

In fifty to sixty years, this divide would become a permanent feature of Lithuanian society, after it was explicitly incorporated into the legal code. Nevertheless, the Statute, which did not completely satisfy the aims of the szlachta, contained numerous laws that were antiquated and in some cases also quite harsh. For this reason, Lithuanian officials petitioned Sigismund I to review and edit the Statute during the Brest Sejm of 1544. Later, the First Statute would be further updated, edited, and reviewed, to more closely align it with the Polish legal code. As a result, the Statute became a blend of the legal customs of ancient Rus', which were preserved in Lithuanian Rus' from the era of *Russkaya Pravda*,[148] and Polish law.[149]

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146 Grand Prince of Moscow Ivan IV (1530–1584), commonly known in English as Ivan the Terrible, went on to become the first tsar of all Rus' (tsar of Russia).

147 The Crown Metrica (in Lithuania, the Lithuanian Metrica, which was an analogous collection of documents developed in parallel with and modeled after the Crown Metrica) was an archival collection of official documents, decrees,

resolutions, and orders issued by the king of Poland, the Sejm, and other official governing bodies within the Kingdom of Poland.

148 ("Rus' Justice" or "Rus' Truth"): The legal code of Kyivan Rus' and the subsequent Rus'ian principalities during the times of feudal division, first written at the beginning of the 12th century.

149 Note: For a detailed history of the Lithuanian Statute, please see Appendix IV.

Ruins of the castle of Barbara Radziwiłł (1520–1551), wife of King Sigismund II Augustus, the last male monarch of the Jagiellon dynasty (from de Danilowicz, 1919, p. 47).

Chapter 16

Sigismund II Augustus. Domestic conditions within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania under Sigismund II Augustus. The state of affairs in Livonia. The addition of Livonia to Lithuania and its aftermath.

In 1545, Sigismund I transferred control of Lithuania to his son, Sigismund Augustus, who had already been elected grand duke of Lithuania during the Vilnius Sejm of 1526.[150] In 1548, Sigismund I died, at the age of 88. After the death of his father, Sigismund Augustus was crowned king of Poland with the name Sigismund II

(r. 1548–1572), thereby maintaining the personal union between Lithuania and Poland.

Sigismund Augustus's mother, Queen of Poland and Grand Duchess of Lithuania Bona Sforza, was known to be a power-hungry and prideful native of Milan who had long entertained the idea of taking control of the administration of government. To this end, she exposed her son from a very early age to tremendous wealth and luxury, surrounding him with prominent aristocrats and courtesans, and allowing him to enjoy all kinds of entertainment. Never having been required to think critically and develop his problem-solving skills, Sigismund Augustus lacked the moral and intellectual development necessary to be an effective leader. His upbringing thereby severely affected his conduct as ruler, as evidenced by the nickname—"King Tomorrow"—that he was given for his habit of procrastinating whenever tasked with the resolution of a government matter.

Sigismund Augustus was married three times. His first and third wives, both of Austrian background, were unable to keep him from seeing other women. His second wife, whom he was believed to love very much, was Barbara Radziwiłł of Lithuania. Despite successfully fighting off the Sejm, whose members demanded that Sigismund Augustus annul his marriage to Barbara, Sigismund Augustus was unable to enjoy many years with his beloved wife, as she died not long after their marriage. Sigismund Augustus spent the final years of his life surrounded by mistresses, who stole from him, and sorcerers, whom he employed in an effort to renew his strength.

Sigismund Augustus's rule was characterized by a complete decline throughout his expansive land possessions, indecisiveness in his administration of government, and unsuccessful military campaigns. It is important to note that these failures were not entirely the result of his qualities as a ruler. Other factors, rooted in

the social and political structure of the nation, also played an important role. It was during this period that the upper strata of Polish and Lithuanian society became enthralled with the pursuit of luxury, losing their prior zeal for advancing national interests and assuming an air of indifference. This sharp moral decline among Lithuanian nobles and lust for material pleasures was noted by many contemporaries, including papal nuncio[151] Cardinal Giovanni Francesco Commendone and Andrey Kurbsky.[152]

As a result of Lithuania's domestic decline, the situation concerning the Grand Duchy's foreign affairs also began to deteriorate. The Poles made every effort to achieve a complete Polish-Lithuanian fusion into a single state. The Tatars increased the frequency of their invasions of Lithuanian lands. Grand Prince of Moscow Ivan the Terrible, having substantially increased his strength and power, called for an acceptance of his new title "Tsar of All Rus'," more insistently claiming the rights to Lithuanian Rus'. In 1566, Lithuania entered into a six-year truce with Moscow. In 1558, however, this truce was broken prematurely when Ivan the Terrible engaged Livonia in a war, which inevitably drew Lithuania back into the fight with Moscow.

Livonia was of incredible strategic importance to Lithuania, since all Lithuanian exports (e.g., grain and lumber) passed through this country. Additionally, a majority of the weapons and craftsmen —instrumental in Moscow's fight against the Tatars and Lithuanians—heading to Moscow from Germany, passed through Livonia. It was therefore of great interest to Lithuania to strengthen and fortify Livonia, in order to prevent Moscow from invading the lands of Livonia and thereby blocking the transport of military supplies from Germany to Mosocw. Nonetheless, Ivan the Terrible's troops continued to successfully advance into the heart of Livonia

and capture various fortified cities, including Tartu, Narva, and Reval (present-day Tallinn).

To defend against Moscow's military, Master of the Livonian Order Gotthard Kettler turned to his neighbors for support. After a number of failed attempts to enter into an alliance with Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, Kettler turned to Sigismund Augustus, with whom he entered into an alliance in Vilnius in 1559. This alliance, however, did not significantly change the state of affairs in Livonia, since Moscow's troops, ignoring the Lithuanian government's warnings that Livonia was now under the protection of the Grand Duchy, continued to advance through Livonia toward the Lithuanian border.

Understanding that they would be unable to survive for much longer, the Livonian knights in 1561 began the process of dividing up the country's territory. The first to secede were the inhabitants of Reval, who submitted themselves to Swedish rule. The island of Saaremaa, in the capacity of the Episcopate of Saaremaa, followed suit, submitting to the Netherlands. The Livonian Order, in accordance with the 1561 Treaty of Vilnius signed by Grand Lithuanian Chancellor Mikołaj Krzysztof Radziwiłł and Master of the Livonian Order Gotthard Kettler, became a subject state of the Grand Duchy. Kettler, now a secular vassal of the grand duke, became duke of Courland, and Mitau (now referred to as Jelgava) was designated as the new capital.

The addition of Livonia to the Grand Duchy's land possessions led to a new war with Moscow, during which Russian forces occupied Polotsk, advancing as far as Vilnius. Meanwhile, as diplomatic negotiations with Ivan the Terrible dragged on, Sigismund Augustus began to increasingly favor a union with Poland. Sigismund hoped that a Polish-Lithuanian "real union"[153] would allow both Lithuania and Poland to extract themselves from

the predicament into which they had fallen as a result of an unfortunate combination of unfavorable foreign policy and growing domestic turmoil.

In order to fully understand the significance of the events that transpired during the rule of the last Jagiellon, who essentially finalized the real union of Lithuania with Poland, it is imperative to first examine the political state of affairs and social life within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the 15th and 16th centuries, along with the changes to Lithuanian social structure that were introduced through the long-term and ever-increasing influence of Poland. It was these changes, together with several other factors, that ultimately led to the Union of Lublin in 1569.

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150 This practice was known as "vivente rege"—with the king (still) living—whereby a successor to the throne was elected while the current ruler was still alive. This strengthened the monarch's power, as it provided greater control over the election of a successor, which was previously carried out solely by the szlachta. This strategy was only actually employed in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the rule of Sigismund I, however, as it was vigorously opposed by the szlachta, who considered it an infringement upon their rights.

151 A papal legate (a representative of the Pope to foreign nations) of the highest rank who heads the diplomatic mission in a particular nation.

152 A prominent Russian political figure, military leader and philosopher, Kurbsky (1528–1583) was the leading political opponent of Ivan the Terrible. He defected to Lithuania in 1564, where he became known as the first Russian political émigré when he was given control of Kovel, Volhynia by Sigismund II Augustus.

153 To reiterate a note presented in Chapter 10: A "real union" is a treaty arrangement in which two or more states interlink themselves in such a way that they share some limited governmental institutions, forming a single international legal personality, short of being unified as a single state in a political union. Under this arrangement, each state can revive its own international personality in the event that the real union is dissolved. A "real union" is distinct from a "personal union" (the former representing a development from the latter), in which two or more states share the same monarch but distinct geographical boundaries, laws, and interests. In contrast with personal unions, real unions—historically limited to monarchies—almost

invariably led to a reduction of sovereignty for the politically weaker constituent(s), as was the case with Poland and Lithuania from 1569 to 1795 and other prominent historical examples, such as that of England and Ireland (1542–1800), Norway and Sweden (1815–1905), and Austria and Hungary (1867–1919).

One origin story of the hereditary ruling class, known as the szlachta in Poland and Lithuania, traces its descent from Lech I, the legendary founder of the Polish nation around the fifth century (Benoît Farjat, date unknown, from Wikiwand.com).

Chapter 17

Changes to the internal organization of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the 16th century. The annulment of the nobility's inherited rights to land ownership. The Lithuanian Council of Lords. The Lithuanian Cabinet. "Feeding." Regional government administration and its characteristics. The Lithuanian szlachta. The granting to the szlachta of rights equal to those of the highest social classes.

The societal structure of Lithuania, beginning during the 15th century and ending during the second half of the 16th century, was predominantly characterized by deep contradictions resulting from a clash between two polar opposite cultural movements: the

Rus'ian and the Polish. From Western Rus', Lithuania adopted regional government administration, veches, and unity of cities and the surrounding lands. From Poland, Lithuania adopted szlachta equality, Magdeburg rights, and serfdom. Although Lithuania was initially under the influence of Rus' and its social organization, the circumstances of the time—primarily the need to defend the nation from external threats—resulted in a dramatic change in Lithuanian society.

To defend against the increasingly strong Teutonic and Livonian Orders, the grand dukes of Lithuania worked to increase the size of the Lithuanian military. To this end, during the 14th century, the grand dukes sought to expand into the lands of Western Rus', which had already been weakened by an onslaught of Tatar attacks and a lack of centralization in government. Having successfully expanded into Western Rus', the Lithuanian grand dukes worked to establish a societal structure that would provide the greatest number of troops for the Lithuanian military. Thus, the grand dukes issued special charters, granting the nobility of the newly annexed territories the rights to hereditary ownership of various parcels of land. These charters were issued with the same provisions as those issued in Lithuania proper to influential members of the Lithuanian nobility.

Specifically, these charters obliged the recipient nobles to accept the supreme authority of the grand duke and, when requested, to provide a certain number of troops for service in the Lithuanian military. Abiding by the same conditions, the regional princes of Rus', who derived the authority to rule over their regions from ancient hereditary law, received their previous land possessions in the form of *votchinas*[154], as long as they accepted the authority of the Lithuanian grand duke. In some cases, however, these land possessions were returned to the regional princes only for

temporary use. It is important to note that the regional princes, obliged with military service and monetary tribute to the Grand Duchy, still enjoyed great freedom on their votchinas.

These *votchinniks* had their own royal courts staffed by regional administrators and government officials. They issued their own charters to monasteries, churches, and nobles. They also maintained the right to freely rule over their votchina, without any interference from the grand duke. Since the regional princes now derived their authority to rule from the grand duke, the ancient custom of inherited rights to land ownership, which previously did not require the grand duke's approval, was effectively annulled. By the beginning of the 15th century, the regional princes—now serving in the capacity of Lithuanian votchinniks, together with the upper nobility and Lithuanian gentry—organized a land-owning aristocracy similar in structure to that of Poland, but of even greater influence.

The members of the aristocracy, known as lords, comprised the Council (*Rada*) of the Lithuanian grand duke, significantly limiting the grand duke's power. The Council of Lords was composed of both secular and religious figures, whose participation in the Council was justified either through historical privileges granted to various magnate families or (for a majority of the members) by holding another government office.[155] The lords, unlike other nobles, were less likely to support regional separatist movements. Although the lords did serve the interests of the regional princes they represented, they firmly upheld national interests. This was the result of the lords' wealth and financial stability, which granted them a privileged position in government up to the beginning of the 16th century, primarily reflected by the special treatment they received in judicial matters, their rights to participate in government, and so on. Additionally, because the lords maintained

land possessions in all regions of the Grand Duchy, they were personally invested in promoting the interests of the Grand Duchy as a whole.

Playing an active role in government administration, through regional rule and participation in sejms, the lords were always well informed about the Grand Duchy's current state of affairs, exerting substantial influence on both domestic and foreign policy. For example, the Council of Lords was responsible for electing the grand duke of Lithuania, who could not engage in relations with foreign nations, issue new laws, modify existing laws, manage the national budget, appoint officials, and so on without the Council's permission.[156] The grand duke respected the advice of the Council, enacting the resolutions passed by the Council for the benefit of all Lithuanians, even when he personally disagreed with them.

Eventually, the grand dukes of Lithuania noticed that their power was being substantially limited by the Council of Lords. To counteract the strength of the Council, the grand dukes began increasing the influence of the lesser szlachta. To this end, Casimir IV issued a new state privilege in 1457 directed toward "Lithuanian, Rus'ian, and Samogitian nobles, knights, and landowners." This laid the foundation for the establishment of rights for the lesser szlachta equal to those of the upper nobility, causing the status of the upper nobility to take a noticeable downturn during the middle of the 15th century.

Nevertheless, up to the beginning of the 16th century, the highest social classes of Lithuania continued to play a central role in Lithuanian government, heavily influencing the politics of the Grand Duchy. It is not surprising that the Council of Lords did not wish to share their rights with the rest of the szlachta and that the process of granting these rights to the lesser szlachta was met with great resistance by the lords. This also explains why of all the

changes enacted to modify the social organization of the Grand Duchy to more closely match that of Poland, only those that were most favorable to the highest social classes actually persisted through the beginning of the 16th century.

One such change was the establishment, in the Polish tradition, of a cabinet of elite government officials, representing a number of different offices. The grand hetman (beginning in 1512) was responsible for leading the Lithuanian military and acting as the judge for all troops, issuing sentences (including the death penalty) for various offenses. The grand chancellor, who served as the head of the Lithuanian chancery, was also responsible for managing the official written correspondence and archives of the Grand Duchy, in addition to certifying with a special seal the legality of any actions taken by the Lithuanian government. The state treasurer was responsible for maintaining the budget of the Grand Duchy. The court treasurer served as a personal accountant to the grand duke, keeping track of the possessions of the grand duke and the royal court. Voivodes and count palatines[157] were responsible for managing the administration of government in lands that were once under the control of regional princes.

It is important to note that the voivode had considerable power over the region that he governed: the voivode had supreme judicial authority in his *voivodeship*, assembled troops for battle, commanded his troops during wartime, and managed the collection of tribute, taxes, and fees.[158] Castellans were responsible for governing cities and also served as assistants to the voivode. *Starostas* (elders) governed a particular area or *powiat*[159] of the voivodeship. Marshals, representatives of the szlachta, were divided into various types: state marshals represented the entire Grand Duchy, court marshals represented those serving the royal court of the grand duke, and powiat marshals represented a particular

region. Standard-bearers (state, court, and powiat) bore an ensign and announced official decrees. With the adoption of Magdeburg rights in Lithuania, the office of *wójt*, or the representative of the inhabitants of a particular city, was established. In addition to the newly introduced Polish government positions, Lithuania maintained a number of offices from ancient Lithuanian Rus', including deputies and *tijūnai* (singular *tijūnas*),[160] who managed farmland under the direct control of the Grand Duchy, ensured the successful function of the judicial system, and directed the collection of profits belonging to the Grand Duchy.

In exchange for properly executing their administrative duties, voivodes, starostas, and deputies received compensation that varied greatly by location. One type of compensation was based on a system known as "feeding." Each voivodeship or area under the jurisdiction of a particular deputy or starosta was required to provide "feed" to its administrative head. This system served as a means by which the highest ranking members of government administration were financially supported by the lands they ruled. It was not uncommon for government administrators to receive multiple lands at once, in which case they would transfer control of these lands, with the grand duke's permission, to their close friends and relatives. In addition to the "feed," administrative heads also received compensation for their participation in the judicial system.[161] Local rulers also received a portion of the tribute collected for the grand duke. Furthermore, in accordance with special charters, local rulers could receive a portion of the revenue generated by the Grand Duchy if they provided services or took on additional responsibilities that were not directly associated with their regular administrative duties. It is important to note that local rulers, when appointed to their positions by the grand duke, were required to pay a fee. During the 15th century, it was commonplace

for local government positions to be auctioned off, creating great competition for these positions.[162] The system of "feeding"[163] was of great importance to the development of the government of Lithuania, serving as a precursor to the concept of salaried government positions.

Through the introduction of all these new positions, the organization of government at the national and local levels came to approach that of Poland, acquiring the shape of an aristocratic system characterized by the absence of internal division between the ruling class and society.[164] The primary reason for this was that the division of the Grand Duchy into administrative regions was the product of centuries of historical and cultural developments that shaped the federation of Lithuanian Rus'. In this federation, Lithuania proper had tremendous political influence and enjoyed an abundance of privileges. Certain lands of Western Rus' (i.e., Podlachia and the Principality of Turov and Pinsk), too weak to function as independent regions in the federation, relied heavily on Lithuania proper for support. In contrast, other lands of Western Rus' (Polotsk, Vitebsk, Kyiv, Volhynia, Podolia, and the Principality of Chernigov), in addition to Samogitia, were relatively loosely tied to Lithuania proper and maintained their regional independence. This preservation of local political tradition was a byproduct not only of the geographic locations of these independent lands (which greatly facilitated their independence), but also of the lack of creativity on the part of the Lithuanian government when dealing with the organization of government. Because the administrative practices of Lithuania's government were quite outdated, Lithuania proper had relatively weak control over the stronger land possessions of the Grand Duchy. Local rule was therefore the predominant form of government in a majority of regions of the Grand Duchy. Furthermore, because local rulers and regional

government administrators (e.g., voivodes and starostas) were representatives of the local nobility, these local government officials did not blindly follow the directives of the grand duke. Instead, local rulers upheld regional interests, thereby greatly influencing the domestic politics of the Grand Duchy. It is also important to note that even the highest government officials and closest advisors to the grand duke could not avoid local influence.

Below the Council of Lords, there was a large class of lesser nobility, whose defining characteristic was obligatory military service. Initially, this class of nobles was composed of the descendants of members of the druzhinas[165] of Lithuanian Rus'. Beginning in the 16th century, the szlachta became closely associated with land ownership. With the issuance of state and local privileges, the Lithuanian szlachta gained many class rights akin to those enjoyed by the Polish szlachta. Since the time of Jogaila's rule, the Poles had expressed the intention to completely attach Lithuania to the Polish crown. To facilitate this incorporation, it was imperative that the social structure of the Grand Duchy be closely aligned with that of Poland and that all disputes and conflicts of interest involving the upper levels of nobility and the szlachta be resolved. Thus, Poland worked to strengthen the Lithuanian szlachta, intending to create a political body that was independent of the Lithuanian magnates. To this end, many legislative reforms were enacted in the Grand Duchy, starting at the end of the 14th century.

The first attempt to grant the lesser nobility of Lithuanian the same rights as those enjoyed by the Polish szlachta can be traced back to the Privilege of 1387, issued by Jogaila. This Privilege was later confirmed by the Privilege of 1413, which granted Lithuanian nobles who converted to Catholicism the same rights and benefits as those of the Polish szlachta. The Privilege of 1447 issued by

Casimir IV expanded the Privilege of 1413, applying it to Orthodox nobles as well. In 1457, Casimir IV awarded a charter to all nobles of the Grand Duchy, granting many rights and benefits, including the right to freely dispose of inherited property and the right to arrange marriages. Later, the lesser Lithuanian nobility began to receive Polish coats of arms and szlachta certification. Under the rule of Sigismund I, the Grand Duchy's judicial system officially recognized the lesser Lithuanian nobility as equal to the Polish szlachta. In 1544, the lesser Lithuanian nobility—the Lithuanian szlachta—began participating in sejms. From this point onward, delegates representing the Lithuanian szlachta became permanent members of the General Sejm, where they continued to increase their rights. These concessions by the highest social classes increased tremendously, especially under the rule of Sigismund II Augustus, who, without any heirs to the throne that would maintain the Polish-Lithuanian personal union, worked tirelessly to establish a real union between Lithuania and Poland.

To garner the support of the Lithuanian szlachta, Sigismund II Augustus enacted a large number of judicial reforms. During the Sejm of 1551, Sigismund II Augustus abolished the fine paid to the treasury by convicted murderers and agreed to appoint only well-established members of the szlachta to administrative positions in Samogitia and Volhynia. During the Sejm of 1559, members of the Lithuanian szlachta were allowed to export without any tariffs all goods and products made on szlachta-owned lands. This concession to the szlachta would later prove to have disastrous consequences for Lithuanian trade. In 1563, members of the szlachta residing in cities became exempt from paying city taxes. In 1564 and 1565, perhaps the most impactful concession was made to the Lithuanian szlachta: voivodes and other government officials were stripped of their jurisdiction over members of the szlachta, who would now be tried by judges freely elected by the szlachta. To discuss

government needs and to elect delegates to the General Sejm, the szlachta was granted the right to assemble powiat sejms, also known as *sejmiks*, in 1565. Members of the Council of Lords and other upper government officials, who owned lands in a given powiat were required to attend the corresponding powait sejm.

Thus, the reform of 1565 not only served as an important update to the organization of government within the Grand Duchy, but also greatly served the interests of the szlachta, allowing members of the lesser nobility to play an active role in the politics of Lithuania. The reform of 1565 was a turning point in Lithuanian history, not only granting members of the szlachta rights equal to those enjoyed by princes, dukes, and lords, but also allowing the szlachta to significantly influence the development of government policies in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

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154 A votchina (вотчина) was a land estate that could be inherited. The owner of a votchina (the votchinnik) not only had property rights to it, but also some administrative and legal power over the people living on its territory, although these residents were not serfs and were free to relocate at any time.

155 Note: During the 14th century, the Lithuanian Council of Lords was composed of prominent representatives of Lithuanian aristocracy and also included the following *ex officio* members: the Bishops of Vilnius, Brest, Samogitia, and Kyiv; the Grand Hetman and Grand Chancellor of Lithuania; the voivodes of Trakai, Vilnius, Nowogródek, Polotsk, Vitebsk, and Podlaskie; the castellans of Vilnius and Trakai; the Elders of Samogitia and Grodno; and various marshals and treasurers.

156 Note: In accordance with a privilege issued in 1492 by Grand Duke Alexander Jagiellon.

157 The title of count palatine (derived from the Latin *palatinus*) originated during the late Roman Empire. Originally referring to an official attached to a royal or imperial palace or household, the title—aka count of the palace or palsgrave—later designated a nobleman of a rank above that of a regular count.

158 Note: The authority of the voivode was restricted by local customs. For example, in the lands of Polotsk, the appointment of a new voivode had to be

approved by the local residents. Additionally, the voivode could serve in the courts only in conjunction with the eldest nobles and burghers of the region.

159 Equivalent to a district.

160 Note: The office of the tijūnas (from the word tėvūnas, meaning "father" in Lithuanian) was later replaced by the position of "deputy."

161 Note: For example, administrative heads received a percentage of the value of the claims in civil cases, fees paid by convicts released from prison, payment for taking possession of property, and payment for making arrests.

162 Note: The Privilege of 1492, issued by Grand Duke Alexander Jagiellon, abolished the requirement of a fee to be paid by the official appointed to a position. Instead, it replaced the requirement with a voluntary contribution.

163 "Feeding" began as tribute in the form of food and then apparently evolved into monetary tribute, which eventually gave rise to salaried government positions.

164 Translation of this sentence from the original Russian proved particularly challenging. For the understanding at which we arrived, we are grateful to both Timothy Snyder (Levin Professor of History at Yale) and Mindaugas Šapoka, researcher at the Lithuanian Institute of History in Vilnius and author of *Warfare, Loyalty, and Rebellion: The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Great Northern War, 1709–1717* (Routledge, 2017). Prof. Snyder kindly took time to offer the insight that "the key here is the context. The sentence in question follows a paragraph about Poland. I think what is being signaled are remaining differences between Lithuania and Poland, after the convergence mentioned above" (email from Prof. Snyder, dated March 13, 2021). Dr. Šapoka explained things this way: "An aristocratic system and the lack of division between the aristocratic families and middling nobility may at first seem a bit contradictory but what I think the author wanted to say here is that the great Lithuanian families had to collaborate with the middling and petty nobles in local politics" (email from Dr. Šapoka, dated April 22, 2021).

165 As mentioned in Chapter 4 above, a druzhina was a retinue (a group of advisors) that served a prince or duke. The term derives from the Russian дружина, which can be translated into English as "fellowship" or "circle of friends."

Lithuanian peasant women on the banks of the Nemunas (E. Gisevius, c. 1840). Reproduced here from: *Zeitechrift fuer Kunstge-schichte*, Leipzig, 1935, p. 290. "E. Gisevius. Frauen am Memelufer, um 1840. Prussia-Museum, Koenigsberg."

Chapter 18

Peasants of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and their rights to land ownership. Various subdivisions of the Lithuanian peasantry. State agriculture. Various forms of peasant land ownership. Taxation of the peasantry. The origins and development of serfdom.

Paralleling the major changes to the position of the szlachta in Lithuanian society, the status of Lithuanian peasantry also underwent substantial upheaval. Prior to the 15th century, there were no barriers separating the various social classes. Among the free population of Lithuania, movement from one social class to another was unrestricted, limited only by the wealth of a particular individual. As a result, because of the possibility for upward

mobility in society, the status of the peasantry of the Grand Duchy prior to the 15th century was considerably positive.

It is important to note, however, that peasants differed from the other land-owning social classes (e.g., the szlachta and the burghers[166]) in that their rights to land ownership were not guaranteed. In other words, despite being able to buy and sell land, the grand duke could take this land away from peasants at any time (the grand duke was not allowed to do this with the lands owned by the szlachta or burghers). Thus, when discussing the rights of the peasantry to land ownership, these rights must be considered only in the context of inter-peasant relations and relations between the peasantry and other social classes.

Up to the middle of the 14th century, Lithuanian peasantry may be categorized into different subdivisions. The *chelyad'*[167] were not free. The landlord peasants were those who lived on lands owned by private landowners. The *gospodar*[168] peasants were those who lived on state lands belonging to the Grand Duchy. By the end of the 14th century, the vast majority of Lithuanian peasants owned land and, except for a small number of chelyad', enjoyed considerable personal freedoms, only occasionally entering into voluntary short contracts with landlords.

The foundations of Lithuanian serfdom can be traced back to villages populated by chelyad', the only subdivision of Lithuanian peasantry (up to the end of the 15th century) that had no rights. Members of the chelyad', who resided on both state and private lands, were individuals of various backgrounds, including prisoners of war, those who were sold into involuntary servitude, convicts who were sentenced to involuntary servitude, those born into involuntary servitude, and those who married a servant. Except for the prisoners of war, all other individuals' period of servitude was

limited to a particular period of time, after which the individual would be emancipated.

Aside from the chelyad', many other peasants settled the lands of private landowners. Closest in status to the chelyad' were the *otchichi*,[169] who were not allowed to leave the lands of a particular landowner and were obliged to reimburse the landowner for use of the rented land through either labor or a portion of the harvest.[170][171] Owners of votchinas could—and, in certain cases, were required to—allow new peasants to settle the votchina. These new peasants settled empty sections of the votchina, reimbursing the landowner with either labor or payment (money or harvested goods).

New settlers were divided into two groups. The first group consisted of peasants who received a loan from the landowner and were therefore not allowed to leave the votchina prior to repaying the loan. The second group consisted of peasants who were free to leave at any time, required to pay only a standard "ransom."[172] The intermediate class of peasants that bridged the gap between the landlord and gospodar peasants was a very large group known as the *danniki*.[173] This class of peasants owned land and could move freely from one area to another. Additionally, danniki were only required to pay a standard tribute to the individual selected by the grand duke.[174] In most cases, the tribute was paid in the form of goods (e.g., honey, beaver pelts, furs, and grain) but monetary tribute was also occasionally used.

Such were the subdivisions of Lithuanian peasantry, who, with the exception of the danniki, resided on lands owned by the szlachta. In accordance with tradition and law, certain peasant classes enjoyed considerable freedoms. For example, apart from the right to migrate from one land to another, many peasants owned land and gathered for special assemblies of the peasantry. These

assemblies initially played an important role in votchina administration, later serving as courts for the resolution of matters during the era of the Lithuanian Statute. These matters included sowing in someone else's fields, property damage, theft, and murder. By the end of the 16th century, with the strengthening of the szlachta, these court sessions, which arose from a mutual responsibility of all members of the community to maintain order within it, began to lose their relevance and were replaced by meetings during which the landowner outlined his plans and goals for the lands he owned.

It is important to note that gospodar peasants—peasants who settled government-owned lands under the control of government officials—enjoyed many political and economic benefits in comparison with other peasants. Although gospodar peasants were required to pay standard tribute to the grand duke, they had property ownership rights to the lands they worked and also maintained the right to freely migrate to different lands.

State agriculture was most highly developed in Lithuania proper, home to the largest number of palaces and state-owned lands. The origin of state agriculture is closely tied to the development of involuntary servitude in the Grand Duchy and the seizure of unoccupied lands by various grand dukes. With lands lying fallow[175] and a system of servant labor in place, it was not long before state agriculture in Lithuania exploded. Servant labor would later be supplemented by the exploitation of the rest of the peasantry of Lithuania, in order to further advance the development of state agriculture.

The number of peasants in Lithuania proper grew substantially as a result of a great influx of Prussians, Samogitians, and Rus'ians during the 13th and 14th centuries. Thus, by the 15th century, Lithuania proper became the most populated territory of the Grand

Duchy. State agriculture in Lithuania proper was further bolstered by the fact that up to the middle of the 16th century, the grand dukes resided permanently in Lithuania, traveling very infrequently to Poland.

In contrast to Lithuania proper, state agriculture in Lithuanian Rus' was characterized by a dramatic decline that was the result of increased control by Lithuania proper in combination with and the desolation and ruin caused by frequent enemy invasion. State agriculture also did not develop in Samogitia, primarily because of the unique political status of the region. Specifically, privileges granted to the lands of Samogitia restricted the establishment of new state-run lands, thereby limiting the number of lands under government control to those that had already been established under Vytautas's rule.

In antiquity, peasants settled and owned land as communities. This type of community settlement, known as a *volost*, consisted of a *selo*[176] and *priselok*,[177] the latter of which was composed of individual peasant lots known as yards. Beginning in the middle of the 15th century, this custom of community settlement was replaced by German manors and the settlement of individual parcels of land known as *voloks*.[178] Shortly thereafter, the volok became the basis for determining taxation to the state. It should be noted that Sigismund II Augustus made a distinction between "service voloks," granted to individuals engaged in military service for the Grand Duchy, and "tributary voloks," which peasants had to pay for with labor and tribute.

Peasant taxation was divided into three major forms: labor, goods, and money. In addition to farming grain, mowing hay, and other fieldwork performed by peasants for their landowners, peasant labor as a form of taxation included participating in gospodar construction projects, providing means of transportation,

serving as watchmen, fishing, and hunting. Taxation in the form of goods involved a reimbursement (known as *dyaklo*[179]) of the landowner with natural goods, and occasionally, an obligation to provide the landowner with food. Taxation in the form of a sum of money involved either a silver or grosz[180] tribute.[181] Certain individuals, such as gardeners and beaver trappers, were only taxed with service, while others were obliged with military service. The latter could be found living on both state and private lands. The size of the taxation in the form of goods varied not only with location and time of the year, but with the peasant family as well.

Factors such as the land area worked by a particular peasant family, the number of domesticated animals owned by the family, and even the number of workers in the family were all taken into consideration when determining the amount of goods to be offered as tribute. Furthermore, on state lands, tribute was not only measured in terms of quantity, but also in terms of quality. Landowner peasants, in accordance with the Statute of 1529, were exempt from all government taxation and tribute, except for the obligation to maintain the roads, bridges, and castles in the area. As a result, the responsibility to provide tribute to the government fell upon the landowners. In most cases, gospodar peasants were required to pay a set tax and offer additional tribute. At the peak of the agricultural season, various gospodar peasants and even burghers went into the fields to assist the chelyad' and other peasants obliged by tribute. This duty, known as communal work, was a form of labor tribute from which landowner peasants were exempt.

The government's goal of transferring the burden of paying taxes from the volost to the individual resulted in the binding of the peasantry to the lands on which they resided. At first, this binding was not unconditional, only existing to ensure the quality of the

work performed on the land. Later, as a result of the heavy influence of German law and the intention of Poland to provide the lesser Lithuanian nobility with the same rights as those enjoyed by the Polish szlachta with respect to the peasantry (thereby hoping to garner support from the Lithuanian szlachta), the status of peasants within the Grand Duchy gradually began to approach that of the Polish *chłopi* (peasants). The decline in status of the Lithuanian peasantry became especially noticeable during the rule of Casimir IV and onward.

During the 15th century, serfdom was effectively established in the Grand Duchy with the passage of the Charter of 1457, which prohibited the movement of peasants from private lands to state lands and vice versa. It was at the same time that the judicial rights of landowners began to develop. By the end of the 15th and beginning of the 16th centuries, the votchina court presided over by the landowner had become a defining characteristic of land ownership. Each successive grand duke following the reign of Casimir IV continued to issue decrees that further reduced the rights of the peasantry, while bolstering those of the szlachta. This gradual process of restricting the rights of the peasants culminated during the second half of the 16th century when all subdivisions of Lithuanian peasantry, from the otchichi to the gospodar peasants, were deprived of their freedoms and equated with the chelyad', in effect making them into nothing more than work animals. From this point on, the condition in which the Lithuanian peasantry found itself was so dire condition that by the end of the 16th century, a multitude of peasants would flee to the steppes, the lower Dnieper River, and the Southern Bug River.

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166 From the German word *burg*, meaning city.

167 Chelyad' (челядь) may be translated as either servant or slave.

168 In Russian, gospodar (господарь) means lord or master. In the lands of Lithuanian Rus', gospodar was used as another name for the grand duke.

169 In Russian, отчичи.

170 There are parallels here with sharecropping, a legal arrangement with regard to agricultural land in which a landowner allows a tenant farmer to use the land in return for a share of the crops produced on that land.

171 Note: These peasants could not be sold by the landowner without the lands they occupied.

172 Note: Those who lived on a particular parcel of land for more than 10 years, the standard term for settlement of land, became serfs.

173 In Russian, данники, meaning "those who pay tribute."

174 Note: The individual who received the tribute was obliged to the grand duke to perform additional military service, beyond the original compulsory term.

175 Farmland that is plowed and harrowed but left unsown for a period in order to restore its fertility as part of a crop rotation or to avoid surplus production.

176 In Russian, село, meaning village.

177 In Russian, присёлок, equivalent to a very small village or hamlet.

178 In the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Kingdom of Poland, and Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, the volok later became the basis for a land measurement unit equal to approximately 52.8 acres (roughly equivalent to 21 hectares or 0.21 square kilometers).

179 Note: *Dyaklo* (Lithuanian: *doklas*), or the Russian *tyaglo*, was one of the forms of tribute in Lithuania.

180 To reiterate a note presented in Chapter 10, a grosz is a Polish monetary unit equal to one hundredth of a zloty.

181 Note: Silver tribute, or "*serebshchizna*" (Russian: серебщизна), was initially a fixed sum taxed on the basis of the size of a peasant's land possession. In some regions, the serebshchizna was paid as tribute to the Tatars. With the issuance of the Charter of 1457, silver tribute became temporary and the sum to be paid became variable, set by a special decree. Those peasants who owned less land than the minimum taxable area but still worked their land or tended to gardens were taxed with a reduced amount.

Kaiser Otto I and his wife Edith arrive near Magdeburg, the German city in northeastern Germany on the Elbe River after which Magdeburg Law or rights were named (19th- or early 20th-century painting, artist unknown, from Familypedia.wikia.org).

Chapter 19

Cities and the reasons for their decline during the 15th century. Measures taken to counter the merging of cities and Magdeburg rights. The impact of Magdeburg rights on inter-class relations within Lithuania.

The growing influence of Poland, which led to the strengthening of Lithuanian nobility, contributed to the decline of many ancient cities, especially in the lands of Lithuanian Rus'. As a result of the conditions of the time, the government of Lithuania sought to establish a system of local organization modeled on the military. To this end, the grand dukes began dividing lands into votchinas and transferring control to the nobility, under two conditions. The first

was obligatory military service that the landowner would have to provide to the Grand Duchy. The second placed the local population under the jurisdiction of the landowner but required that the landowner give up control of the city. By placing cities directly under state control, cities were administratively torn from their respective regions. The veche was replaced by a voivode (along with his assistants: elders, castellans, etc.) appointed by the grand duke. In other words, local rule was replaced by state rule.

In addition to the disintegration of the local community and the development of private land ownership during the 15th century, the following phenomenon was observed: Landowners obligated by military service to the Grand Duchy, previously associated with city life, began to gain szlachta privileges that distinguished them from the burghers[182]—the city's merchant population—and as a result, began leaving the cities to settle on their votchinas. Thus, the lands surrounding the cities began to progressively disintegrate into votchinas, leaving cities weak, defenseless, and surrounded by hostile land owners that greedily divided up what were once city lands. Furthermore, because of constant invasion, cities were devastated by both foreign occupation and domestic military requisition. By the 15th century, a large number of cities, especially along the borders of the Grand Duchy, had fallen into a state of complete desolation.

Government officials, voivodes, castellans, and elders also oppressed those living in cities. Because the government was interested in developing cities as centers of commerce, it was forced to take action to counter the cities' dramatic decline. To this end, the grand dukes began granting cities "German autonomy," also known as Magdeburg rights.[183] Magdeburg rights were established in Poland with the arrival of German colonists as early as the 13th century and were established in Lithuania not long thereafter.

Released from the jurisdiction of voivodes and other government officials, burghers were granted various commercial privileges and were taxed at a reduced rate. Charters establishing Magdeburg rights were granted either at the request of cities or on the grand duke's own initiative.

The charters were all very similar in content and format, differing only in the amounts and details of city revenue and state taxes. These charters usually contained the five following rights and privileges: First, the city was completely exempt from all general laws, leaving the act of legislation to the city residents. Second, the city was released from the judicial and executive control of state government officials and was granted autonomy in judicial and administrative matters. Additionally, city rule was divided into two main branches. The jury was an assembly of 12 lay judges, led by the wójt[184] (appointed by the grand duke), who was responsible for hearing criminal and civil cases. The other branch was the rada (council), composed of councilmen selected from those living in the city and led by the burgomeister, who managed the city's agriculture, commerce, and infrastructure.[185] Third, the city was granted property rights to the lands within the confines of the city and in the surrounding area. Fourth, those residing in the city (the burghers) received various benefits and subsidies with regard to commerce and were granted the right to enter state and private forests to satisfy their need for lumber. Fifth, burghers were often exempt from various duties and tribute (e.g., compulsory military service, gatekeeping, providing means of transportation, and customs duties).

Magdeburg rights began spreading across Lithuania during the 14th century. One of the first cities to be granted Magdeburg rights was Vilnius (in 1387). Because the system of Magdeburg rights was initially foreign to Lithuania, it was greatly modified on the

regional level to better serve the needs of local cities. As a result, a single standardized form of city autonomy never developed in the Grand Duchy. This variation was further compounded by the existence of "private cities"—cities under the control of private individuals. In such cases, the owner would (with the grand duke's permission) grant Magdeburg rights to the city, while retaining control of the courts, the budget, and the administration, effectively depriving the city of the autonomy it was guaranteed by its Magdeburg charter. The institution of Magdeburg rights across the Grand Duchy was met with great protest by government officials and elders, leading to increased tension and hostility between the various social classes.

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182 Note: From the German word *burg*, meaning city.

183 For background information relating to Magdeburg rights, please refer to note number 11 in Chapter 10. (That note represents a consolidation of the author's original, more detailed, footnote, which originally appeared here, with a shorter one that originally appeared at that point in Chapter 10, as we thought it might be useful to the reader to present more complete background information relating to Magdeburg rights earlier in the text.)

184 The *wójt* (in Lithuanian, *vaitas*) was essentially equivalent to a starosta or village headman.

185 Note: The duties and practices of both branches were not always fixed. For example, the number of jurors and councilmen constantly fluctuated, the wójt would often preside over both branches, and both branches would sometimes merge into a single collective body known as the magistracy.

A 17th-century woodcut showing various members of Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth society, in which only the Jewish (ŻYD) and Armenian (ORMIANIN) members are identified ethnically, with all ten others identified occupationally (barber, painter, butcher, and so on), from Wikimedia Commons.

Chapter 20

The regional judicial system. The authority of the regional judiciary. The organization of the courts and public participation in the judicial system. Court officials. The community courts: communal court and assembly court. The decline of the community courts and the rise of the votchina court. State and city courts. Changes to the structure of the judiciary to better serve the interests of the szlachta and the judicial reforms of 1564– 1565. The Jewish court. A general characterization of the judicial system of the Grand Duchy prior to the 16th century.

Relations between the various social classes of the Grand Duchy were changing greatly by the end of the 14th century. The nobility

became increasingly isolated from the other social classes, while the lesser nobility—the szlachta—worked to gain the same rights as the Lithuanian elite. At the same time, the judicial system of the Grand Duchy was dramatically changing as well. Up to the beginning of the 15th century, the highest degree of regional judicial authority lay in the hands of the voivodes and elders.[186] In the volosts, voivodes and elders were replaced by deputies (formerly known in the Grand Duchy as tijūnas). The entire region to which the deputy was assigned and all its residents, including the government officials of the voivodeship (except for those directly appointed by the grand duke and the Council of Lords), were under the deputy's judicial authority. It should be noted, however, that members of a number of different social classes were exempt from the local judicial system, required only to answer directly to the grand duke. Among these were the members of the Council of Lords, magnates, and, as allowed by special privileges, specific individuals.[187]

The judicial authority of the voivode encompassed all matters and conflicts within a given region. There were, however, other matters—known as "great matters"—that were to be presented directly to the court of the grand duke. These great matters included conflicts regarding state lands, issues concerning membership in the szlachta (both entering the szlachta and being removed from it), political crimes, theft, and murder. Initially, during the 14th and 15th centuries, the verdict of the regional court was final[188] and those who were wrongly convicted were required to personally settle their differences with the ruling judge. Over time, however, this practice, which did not satisfy the judicial demands of the public and the government, was gradually replaced by a formal appeals process. Thus, the formal institution of a system of appeals through the Second Statute of 1566, which officially recognized the process of presenting appeals to the grand duke, was

not a novel concept but simply a legal manifestation of a custom that had already been established in the judicial system of the Grand Duchy.

At the regional level, local government officials provided counsel to the voivode or elder presiding over the court proceedings. It was also not uncommon for various dukes, princes, lords, and higher-ranking nobles to join the local government officials, although these nobles played a much more passive role, primarily serving as witnesses that could testify if the case was revisited at a later date. The other, much more significant, service that these nobles provided was providing counsel regarding local customary law, as they were representatives of the local landowners and were most familiar with local legal practices.

Because the public law perspective on the judicial system in the Grand Duchy was poorly developed, the intricacies of civil, criminal, and procedural law did not interest government administrators. As a result, the legal counsel of the local nobility was central to the proper administration of justice. With respect to taxes and tribute, although the government was much more interested in these matters, the lack of real property (which could have been used to record land relations and the financial duties of the population), meant that the courts once again had to rely on local nobles for assistance. With their help, the government learned of and sanctioned the relevant provisions of customary law that determined the types and amounts[189] of people's financial obligations. In this regard, the system of jurors established by the First Statute was simply the development and official recognition of the old practice of judicial counsel.

Voivodes often transferred control of the courts to their deputies and marshals. Also involved in the judicial system were other government officials, including the *vizhi*, who officially verified the

rulings of the courts, and the *detskie*, who called witnesses to court, interviewed them, and carried out court verdicts. It should be noted that the detskie, as a result of the private law legal tradition in Lithuania, served in the courts not as representatives of the government, but as representatives of the plaintiff.

In addition to the regional judiciary, community courts were also prevalent in the Grand Duchy, with the communal and the assembly courts serving as the two predominant forms. Communal courts, based on the principle of *in foro publico* (in the public forum) and independent of the regional courts, were polar opposites to the court of the grand duke. Communal courts were prevalent in Lithuania up to the passage of the Second Statute and consisted of "good folk" who were selected for their positions either by the community or directly by the litigating parties.

Assembly courts emerged as a result of the collective responsibility of the local community to maintain order. Not all members of the local community participated in the assembly court, however, as participation was limited to only those heads of household who were permanent residents of the community. The sons and brothers of these heads of household, in addition to women, only participated in the assembly courts as needed by the community, serving in the capacity of witnesses to the legal proceedings. Aside from the aforementioned heads of household, individuals from neighboring communities (most often one or two from each neighboring settlement) also participated in the assembly courts. These individuals did not contribute to the verdict but instead audited the proceedings. Although landlords were allowed to attend sessions of the assembly courts, they did not participate in the proceedings. The assembly court convened when a victim requested the local population to search for the perpetrator. Thus, the assembly gathered at the site of the crime.

Besides handling criminal cases, the assembly court also settled various civil cases involving neighbors (e.g., reimbursement for damages and the resolution of land ownership conflicts).[190] It is important to note that all resolutions of the assembly court were final and the parties involved were required to abide by the decision of the court. The legal basis for the assembly court's verdicts was derived from the ancient tradition of "assembly law" (as opposed to "state law," i.e., the written laws of Lithuania as outlined by the Lithuanian Statute). All individuals who were not affiliated with the szlachta and resided within the confines of the "assembly boundary" (which may or may not have corresponded with the borders of a given volost) were under the jurisdiction of the assembly courts. In certain cases, the authority of the assembly court even extended to landowners who agreed to abide by the assembly court's ruling.

The gradual increase in the power of the landowners, which limited the community rights of the general population, resulted in dramatic changes to the Lithuanian judicial system. During the 16th century, assembly courts began to lose their prior authority, ceding control to the landowners, who (often in conjunction with a priest) began presiding over legal cases and issuing verdicts based on the Lithuanian Statute. The authority of the communal courts began to diminish even earlier: during the 15th century, when social class distinctions became more apparent and the rights of the szlachta began to increase.[191] Thus, the power of the community courts was gradually transferred to government officials and the privileged class of Lithuanian lords. The emergence of the votchina court can also be seen as a product of this judicial shift, becoming widely employed in parallel with the establishment of serfdom and the increase in Polish influence on Lithuania. Although the votchina court was initially reserved for Catholic landowners, as a result of

Casimir IV's Privilege of 1457, this court was expanded to serve the entire szlachta.[192]

In conjunction with the separation of the szlachta from the other social classes within the Grand Duchy, the lesser nobility sought jurisdiction rights equal to those enjoyed by the upper nobility and members of the Council of Lords. Contributing to this movement was the following factor: During the 1560s, to fulfill the needs of the Lithuanian military, it was required that local rulers substantially increase their administrative (through participation in sejms) and military activity. To lighten the burden of the voivodes, elders, and castellans (castle governors), the judicial duties of the szlachta were transferred, through the passage of the reform of 1564, to the state courts. The state courts were established in 1534 with the goal of providing uninterrupted judicial services to Lithuanians, even when government officials were required to abandon their duties and assemble for sessions of the Sejm. In fact, this was a major issue, as all local courts temporarily closed while the Sejm convened. This was because the voivodes, elders, tijūnas, and other government officials—whose administrative duties included direct participation in the local judiciary—were absent from their respective regions.

The only court that remained open while the Sejm convened, therefore, was the court of the grand duke. Because this system left the grand duke's court overwhelmed with judicial cases, special sessions of the Sejm led by the Council of Lords were established in 1529 to specifically deal with judicial matters. Thus, these "judicial sejms" were established to lighten the burden of the grand duke during sessions of the General Sejm, which primarily convened to discuss matters of national defense. Originally, the judicial sejms—state powiat courts—consisting of a government official and two representatives elected by the officials of the powiat they represented, dealt with civil cases. Beginning in 1566, the

composition of the state courts was updated to better serve the interests of the local szlachta. Specifically, the szlachta was granted the rights to elect four judges, four sub-judges, and four scribes to the state courts (these 12 individuals had to be confirmed by the grand duke prior to taking office).

The same year, special city courts were established to rule on criminal cases. These city courts were headed by a voivode or elder and included three judges and a scribe, all appointed by the voivode. The judicial reforms of 1564–1565, based on the principle of decentralization, made the courts much more efficient and widespread, becoming readily accessible to the general population. Specifically, the reforms increased the number of courts in each powiat and placed limits on the length of court sessions. The reforms also contributed to the equalization of the szlachta and upper nobility by annulling the privilege that exempted magnates, voivodes, marshals, and other government officials from being tried by the state courts. In this way, upper nobles became subject to the same judicial process as the rest of the general population.

During the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th, Lithuanian Jews—like the szlachta, upper nobility, and all other free social classes—were subjected to the direct judicial rule of the grand duke and the local officials appointed by him.[193] The "burgher wójt" had no judicial authority over the Jews. Instead, Jews were under the jurisdiction of the "Jewish judge" (*Judex Judaeorum*), who tried criminal cases, and the Jewish community court, which tried civil cases. It was possible, however, for the litigators to request that their civil case be tried before the so-called Jewish judge. Beginning in the middle of the 15th century, with the advancement and strengthening of the community, the judicial rights of the Jews began to be governed by privileges presented to various communities, in the same manner as Magdeburg rights.

These privileges exempted Jews from the general courts, transferring judicial authority to the "Jewish wójt," who was elected by the Jews and confirmed by the grand duke, holding this position for life. The so-called Jewish wójt was not limited in his judicial authority: all cases were required to be tried before him, no matter how serious the nature of the alleged offense.[194]

A characterization of the judicial system of the Grand Duchy up to the 16th century should note that toward the end of the 15th century, the judicial rights of the peasants began to conflict with the interests of landowners, who sought unrestricted authority over the peasantry. When landowners were granted the authority to decide the lives of the peasants under their rule, community courts began to lose their relevance. Furthermore, the verdicts of the community, having lost their judicial authority, contributed to the decline of assembly law. The grim status of the village communities by the 16th century indicated that the community-based judiciary was obsolete. This form of administering justice, which contradicted the new developments in community life, was destined to disappear, as customary law was gradually being replaced by a written legal code and because the power of the landowners was increasing as a result of the socioeconomic decline of the peasantry.

Simultaneously, the granting of Magdeburg rights to those residing in cities, which established a special judiciary for cities, the emergence of serfdom (which can be linked to the transfer of judicial authority over the peasantry to landowners), and the exemption of the szlachta from the jurisdiction of voivodes and elders, all contributed to the decline of the regional judiciary. Thus, by the end of the 16th century—strongly influenced by Poland—the szlachta's state courts emerged as the primary judiciary of the Grand Duchy, serving the interests of the social class that would, from this century onward, control Lithuania's development.

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186 Note: Elders were essentially equal to voivodes, except for the fact that elders did not manage the local military forces. Thus, they were often referred to as "court elders." Elders were predominantly found in Volhynia, Samogitia, and Podolia.

187 Note: To avoid persecution and harassment by local government officials, those who were involved with the treasury of the Grand Duchy (e.g., tax collectors) were exempt from local judicial action, placed under the direct judicial authority of the grand duke.

188 Note: Although extremely rare, the courts in some regions, as a result of particular privileges, were unable to issue a verdict without a directive from the grand duke.

189 Note: The government of Lithuania was often unfamiliar with the specific taxes and duties—military service as opposed to tribute—that were required of particular individuals. In these instances, the determination of the individual's social class rank was made with the help of the local population. Other matters, such as the ownership of a particular parcel of land or the legal grounds for ownership of property, were also resolved on the basis of this counsel.

190 Note: If the case involved a land ownership conflict, the assembly gathered at the location of the land in question.

191 Note: Independent community courts remained only in privileged regions where Magdeburg rights had been instituted.

192 Note: The votchina court was able to handle all cases, except those involving the gravest criminal offenses, such as rape (these cases were handled by local government administrators).

193 Note: The subject of the public and legal status of Jews in Lithuania prior to 1569 is treated in Appendix I.

194 Note: Matters involving both Jews and Christians were tried by the "mixed court," consisting of the voivode and his deputy, in combination with the "Jewish wójt."

"The Baptism of Lithuania" by Władysław Ciesielski (1900), depicting Jadwiga I of Poland, Władysław II Jagiełło, and Andrzej Jastrzębiec (from Commons.Wikimedia.org).

Chapter 21

The Catholic Church in Lithuania during the 15th and 16th centuries. The higher levels of clergy. Cathedral chapters and the lower levels of clergy. The internal status of the Catholic Church and the reasons for its decline. The status of the Eastern Orthodox Church in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The separation of the Lithuanian Orthodox Church from the Moscow Metropolitanate. Patronage and its contribution to the decline of the Church. Attempts to revitalize the Lithuanian Orthodox Church.

From the 15th century to the middle of the 16th century, the Catholic Church in Lithuania experienced dramatic internal decline. The Grand Duchy was divided into four Catholic episcopates: the dioceses of Vilnius, Samogitia, Kyiv, and Lutsk.

Each diocese was led by a bishop appointed by the grand duke and confirmed by the pope. These bishops, the leaders of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, maintained considerable power in the spheres of both justice and Church administration. For example, bishops had complete judicial authority over all members of the clergy and judicial authority over the laity when dealing with matters involving crimes against religion, disputes over Church property, and marriage. Furthermore, bishops were granted unrestricted civil and military administrative power throughout the numerous lands belonging to the Church.

The dioceses generated considerable revenue: each diocese on average generated annual income of approximately 8,000 gold florins,[195] an enormous sum at the time. The diocese of Vilnius brought in 40,000 gold florins annually. Beyond that, bishops served as "ex officio" members of the General Sejm, undertaking civil administrative duties—to the detriment of their pastoral responsibilities—and playing a central role in the politics of the Grand Duchy. As members of the wealthiest families of Lithuania, bishops held leadership positions in the Sejm. Because of their wealth and background, they were highly respected by the Lithuanian nobility, thereby greatly influencing the domestic and foreign policy of the Grand Duchy.

The state of affairs can be understood in terms of the way that bishops were appointed in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In most cases, the individual appointed to serve as bishop was not selected based on qualifications such as scholarship and pastoral talent, but rather was chosen because he was a member of an influential magnate[196] family. As a result, by the first half of the 16th century, the highest positions of the Lithuanian Catholic Church were primarily occupied by secular princes and nobles, who had neither the time nor the desire to manage the Church, instead focusing

entirely on amassing glory, wealth, and power. Never ceasing to act as members of the Lithuanian aristocracy, these "princes of the Church" retained the greed, thirst for power, and immorality characteristic of the Lithuanian elite, thereby introducing elements of decay into the country's spiritual life. This moral decline became even more apparent by the end of the rule of Sigismund I, when his wife, Queen Bona, took control of the government. It was at this time that the practice of "selling" the position of bishop became commonplace.

Further exacerbating this worrisome state of affairs, the lower levels of clergy and cathedral chapters[197] also showed signs of moral decline, as evidenced by the reports of the papal nuncios[198] and the numerous acts issued by the cathedral chapter of Vilnius and other cathedral chapters during the 16th century. The selection of the members of the cathedral chapter was not performed by the bishop, but rather by the grand duke. Because the title of canon did not involve any responsibilities and was associated with considerable wealth and power, the grand duke only appointed to the position those individuals who had brought him personal benefit, regardless of religious education and moral values.[199] The sons of aristocrats were most commonly installed as canons of the cathedral chapters, despite being underage and motivated primarily by wealth and power. The lower levels of clergy were no better. Primarily composed of unsuccessful Polish clerics, the lower levels of Lithuanian clergy were characterized by a lack of both morality and thorough religious education.[200] Similar to the situation with the higher levels of clergy and the "princes of the Church," the lower levels of Lithuanian clergy were plagued by greed, gluttony, drunkenness, and moral depravity.[201]

By the middle of the 16th century, the many problems with the leadership of the Lithuanian Catholic Church—being out of touch

with the general population as a result of not knowing the local language, depravity, and the pursuit of wealth and power—had reached their height. So it was that the Lithuanian Catholic Church lost its moral authority and the strength to resist the new ideology of the Protestant Reformation that, under the rule of Sigismund I, had been ushered into Lithuania through Germany and Poland, rapidly spreading across the Grand Duchy.

At this time, the Orthodox Church in Lithuanian Rus' was also under considerable strain. The politics of the grand dukes of Lithuania with respect to Orthodoxy were quite contradictory. Although the grand dukes understood the need to maintain good relations with the large Orthodox population of Lithuanian Rus', they supported the missionary efforts of the Polish clergy and the spread of Catholicism in the lands of Lithuanian Rus'. This political tension explains the many contradictory privileges and decrees issued during the 15th century and the first half of the 16th century by the grand dukes of Lithuania with regard to the Orthodox Church.[202]

The struggle against Moscow and the associated desire of Lithuania to free its land possessions in Rus' from control by the Moscow Metropolitanate prompted the grand dukes of Lithuania, beginning with Vytautas, to seek a separation of the Church of Western Rus' from the Eastern Orthodox Church. After the patriarch of Constantinople refused to install a separate Metropolitan in Lithuania, a council of bishops of Western Rus', at the request of Vytautas, installed as the Metropolitan of Kyiv Gregory Tsamblak, who served in this capacity until 1419. Eight bishops were under the authority of the Metropolitan of Kyiv, who was either elected by the Synod or appointed by the grand duke and ruled under the direction of the patriarch of Constantinople. In contrast with the Eastern Orthodox Church, the laity and city

communities were involved in the administration of the Church of Lithuanian Rus'.[203] The regional and city clergy were under the authority of the synodal protopresbyter,[204] who also ruled in judicial matters concerning the Church that involved the clergy or the laity or both. The judicial status of the Orthodox clergy was determined by privileges issued by the grand duke.

Monasteries were not involved in Church administration. Although certain monasteries were under the direct control of a particular bishop, the majority of monasteries were considered "privileged," i.e., under the patronage of a benefactor and his descendants. In all administrative, economic, and judicial matters, these monasteries were completely independent of the bishop. Such monasteries were therefore in effect the property of their benefactors, who were able to appoint hegumens and archimandrites,[205] received all revenue generated by the monastery, and were able to fully shut down the monastery if they chose to do so.

As was the case with monasteries, parish churches were also divided into two categories: "privileged" churches established by private individuals, functioning under their control, and "unprivileged" churches under the control of a bishop. Parishioners were more involved in the unprivileged churches, participating in parish administration through the assignment of priests and the management of the parish's budget. Churches that were privileged were provided with a set income by the benefactor, for which the benefactor was granted the ability to assign and remove priests, the right to transfer the patronage to another benefactor, and the option to stop patronizing the parish.

It is not surprising that the power dynamic between benefactors and priests had a devastating impact on the Orthodox Church in Lithuania. It was common for individuals with no religious

education or proper training to be assigned as priests. Greedy and lacking strong moral values, such priests helped to advance the interests of the benefactors and sought only to amass wealth and please their benefactors, at the expense of their pastoral duties. The establishment of a Polish-Lithuanian union further exacerbated these issues. Only the most morally upstanding members of the Lithuanian Orthodox clergy recognized the dangers of such a union. Not long thereafter, these honorable clerics were replaced by those who had adapted to the situation and sought to strengthen the union between Poland and Lithuania for their own personal gain.

As a result of these developments, the clergy of Lithuania experienced a sharp moral decline. Greed, selfishness, and other negative traits emerged among members of the clergy, leading to a loss of all credibility and moral authority over their parishioners. It was at this time that a movement began among the Orthodox population of Lithuania to revitalize the Orthodox Church. Numerous brotherhoods were formed to pull the Lithuanian Orthodox Church out of a state of total decline and demoralization, reviving the Church and re-establishing it on new moral grounds.

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195 To reiterate a note presented in Chapter 10, the florin was a coin produced from 1252 to 1533, containing 3.54 grams of fine gold. Although the purchasing power was variable, according to some estimates, it ranged from 140 to 1,000 modern US dollars. To give some context, during the first half of the 15th century, it is estimated that the annual income for a servant was approximately 10 florins and the annual income for a physician was 60 florins.

196 The magnate social class of wealthy and influential nobility arose around the 16th century, over time gaining increasing influence over Commonwealth politics. Because of the extent of their power and independence, the most powerful among them were known as "little kings."

197 A college of clerics formed to advise a bishop was known as a chapter.

198 Note: Among those who presented detailed reports on this matter were papal nuncio Giovanni Francesco Commendone (in 1563 and 1564) and Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius (in 1551).

199 Note: For example, Sigismund II Augustus awarded one doctor who cured Sigismund II Augustus's mother, Queen Bona, with the title of canon of the cathedral chapter of Vilnius.

200 Note: During this period, there was not a single seminary in Lithuania—and not even a single school in Samogitia.

201 Note: As outlined in the 1551 report of Cardinal Stanislaus Hosius to the Synod of Piotrków.

202 Note: During the rule of Casimir IV, a branch of the Order of Cistercians was established in Vilnius to counter the Orthodox Church. In 1480, the construction of new Orthodox churches was prohibited in Vitebsk and Vilnius. In 1531, the Catholic bishop of Vilnius was no longer allowed to preside over judicial matters involving Orthodox Christians. Additionally, Orthodox Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski was unable to serve as a member of the Sejm because of his faith.

203 Note: The most prominent member of the laity was Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski, a great supporter and defender of Orthodoxy in Lithuania.

204 A priest of higher rank in the Eastern Orthodox and the Byzantine Catholic Churches, generally corresponding to Western Christianity's archpriest or the Latin Church's dean.

205 Titles for the head of a monastery, similar to the title of abbot.

16th-century Polish woodcut depicting a peasant in stocks (Wikipedia.org).

Chapter 22

A general characterization of the social and government structure of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania by the middle of the 16th century. The lack of barriers between the social classes. The gradual separation of the szlachta from the other social classes and the reasons for this phenomenon. The establishment of serfdom. The status of cities and the reasons for their decline. The federative nature of Lithuanian government and its impact on Lithuania's development.

When characterizing the internal structure of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the time of the Union of Lublin—that is, by the middle of the 16th century—it is first important to note that a unique feature of Lithuanian social organization was, up to the 15th century, the lack of barriers between the social classes. Up to the 15th century, upward social mobility was not restricted and was

based primarily on an individual's wealth. Occupations—land ownership, agriculture, commerce, craftsmanship, or banking—were not limited to individuals of particular social classes: everyone was free to pursue the work they desired. There was also no ideology that made participation in commerce or industry incompatible with membership in the szlachta, or land ownership only suitable for the nobility, or commerce and craftsmanship exclusively the work of the burghers, or agriculture the vocation of the peasantry alone.

Up to the 15th century, a member of the szlachta could engage in commerce and invest his earnings, a burger could acquire land, and a peasant—saving up his earnings from felling timber, fishing, hunting, and other work—could eventually become a landowner himself. Even up to the middle of the 16th century, it was still possible to become an "estate noble" by either paying tribute or providing "estate service."[206] Similarly, a servant could temporarily be granted control of lands by the lord that he served, in exchange for military service. Later, once the grand duke approved of this transfer of land, the same servant became a land owner, only obliged to the grand duke with estate service. No other steps were required: the grand duke did not need to formally promote the former servant to the szlachta and it was not necessary to grant a new coat of arms to the servant or add the servant to an existing szlachta coat of arms.[207] Thus, membership in the *szlachta* was achieved simply by owning land and providing estate service.

Landowners were divided into three classes: dukes, lords, and szlachta-nobles. The differences between these three classes were primarily economic. Just as a landowner could become a member of the Council of Lords, the opposite could also occur, as simple familial ties to dukes and lords did not confer any benefits.[208] Prior to the 15th century, all Lithuanian nobles relied on one another for

support through a system of vassal relations. Their personal involvement in land ownership and government administration varied greatly: members of the highest levels of this feudal system, as a result of their wealth and familial ties to the grand duke, were closely involved with central government authority. The lowest noble classes, in contrast were practically indistinguishable from free land owners and members of city communities.

During the middle of the 15th century, however, this social order began to change. The Lithuanian nobility, the szlachta, started to differentiate itself from the other social classes. It would be incorrect to ascribe this change solely to the influence of Poland, as another factor also contributed to the strengthening of the szlachta and its privileged status. Because economic and cultural developments in Lithuania at this time led to increased occupational specialization—and since the military of the Grand Duchy required a large number of troops to defend against the increasingly powerful forces of Moscow—it was imperative that the szlachta be organized in a very specific manner. Furthermore, since the defense of the nation was the primary focus of the Lithuanian government, the social class responsible for providing military service would naturally hold a prominent and privileged position in Lithuanian society. The peasantry and those residing in cities were gradually pushed out of government positions and began working in the areas of commerce, industry, and agriculture. Thus, the szlachta—which provided for national defense, was tasked with special government obligations, and participated in sejms—was unique in terms of the nature of its involvement in government. It was on this basis that the Lithuanian nobility derived its rights and benefits, and under the influence of Poland, began to enjoy the characteristic szlachta privileges that greatly contributed to the later strengthening and development of this social class.

While the szlachta was increasing in strength, members of the peasantry were being forced into serfdom. This was the direct consequence of the need to provide the social class that served in the military with the means to fulfill their military obligations and the desire of the government to transfer the burden of peasant taxes to the landowner in order to receive payments more consistently. The earliest form of serfdom was established in Lithuania through the state privilege of 1457, which prohibited the migration of peasants from private to government lands and vice versa. It was at this time that the votchina courts led by landowners began to develop. By the beginning of the 16th century, participation in the votchina courts became a necessary part of land ownership. By the middle of the 16th century, the many diverse categories of Lithuanian peasantry completely disappeared, leaving only a workforce of involuntary servants, becoming in effect nothing more than work animals.

The strengthening of the szlachta also resulted in the decline of many ancient cities, especially in Lithuanian Rus'. With the distribution of lands that were formerly under the control of cities, these cities began to lose their significance. This diminishment was further compounded by the continuous fighting that led to the destruction and plundering of cities and frequent requisition by Lithuanian troops. The government, interested in developing cities and centers of commerce and industry, was obliged to take measures against their decline and impoverishment, granting cities Magdeburg rights. This exempted cities from general laws and granted them autonomy in local government administration, the judiciary, and finances, thereby facilitating their revival and growth across Lithuania.

To conclude, it is important to note that by the middle of the 16th century, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was not a single, united, and centralized state. Instead, the Grand Duchy was a

federation of lands of Lithuanian Rus', with a highly developed system of local self-governance.[209] This can be explained by the fact that Lithuania had been exposed to the highly developed Rus'ian organization of government at a time when Lithuania had not yet developed its own system of governance and administrative structure. Thus, Lithuania adopted the system that had already been established in Rus', only slightly modifying it to better suit the needs of the Grand Duchy. Over time, this became an administrative tradition, with newly annexed territories retaining their Rus'ian form of government organization.

The conservative approach to regional government administration corresponded very well with the ideologies promoted by Poland and its growing influence on Lithuania from the end of the 14th century. In fact, Poland also resembled more of a federation than a single united nation at the time, as it only began to develop centralized government control with the advent of its personal union with Lithuania. The federative nature of the Grand Duchy explains why the various lands of Lithuania that maintained their existing government structures were granted privileges by the grand duke.

The conditions for the annexation of Samogitia and a majority of lands of Western Rus' were outlined in "state charters." These charters were the result of a compromise between the government of Lithuania and the people residing in the lands being annexed. Specifically, the state charter was essentially a peace treaty that ended war and contained provisions for future relations between the two previously warring parties. It should be noted that the side that lost the war was still actively involved in the drafting of the charter's provisions.[210] This federative approach, which allowed local customs and religious practices to be freely expressed—and the peoples of the various regions to peacefully develop under the

protection of their ethnic traditions—greatly contributed to the growth and rise to power of the Grand Duchy.

From the end of the 15th century, however, the same federative approach became a source of weakness for Lithuania, even becoming a reason for its decline. This was because the defense of the nation against the threat from Moscow called for decisive and collective action, direction from a single authority, enthusiastic leadership, and a strong centralized government structure. Conflicting local interests were supposed to be replaced by a strong sense of nationalism. Yet in Lithuania, this did not occur. For various reasons, the different regions of the Grand Duchy did not accept the required changes—and the central government of Lithuania was too weak to force the regions to serve the interests of the nation.

Poland, which had introduced internal division and religious intolerance into Lithuania, also contributed to the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the various regions of Lithuanian Rus' with regard to supporting national interests. Thus, Moscow, with its centralized government and united national religious traditions, turned out to be stronger than Lithuania. This left Lithuania with a choice: either lose all its territories in the lands of Rus' but preserve national independence or attempt to defend its territories in the lands of Rus' from Moscow's forces through a union with Poland but lose its sovereignty. Lithuania chose the latter.

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206 Note: "Estate service" involved the transport and distribution of various letters and decrees issued by the grand duke throughout a given government estate, as well as the transport of all revenue collected from that estate to Vilnius.

207 Note: The fact that many of the privileges of the szlachta were closely tied to land ownership during the 16th century is clearly demonstrated by the Second and Third Statutes. According to the sections regarding members of the

szlachta who did not own land, if such members of the szlachta were accused of robbery or murder, they were unable to enjoy the judicial privileges of the "landed szlachta," and instead were tried in the same manner as tribute-paying citizens.

208 Note: Only certain noble families, such as the Czartoryski family, were granted inherited rights to membership in the Council of Lords.

209 Note: By 1569, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was administratively divided into the Duchy of Samogitia and 13 voivodeships, made up of Vilnius, Trakai, Nowogródek, Minsk, Polotsk, Vitebsk, Mstsislaw, Smolensk, Kyiv, Podolsk, Bracław, Brest, and Volhynia.

210 Note: This phenomenon is not only confirmed by the format of the state charters, which usually began with a section that indicated they were drafted with the involvement of the local population, but also by the inclusion of financial, legal, civil law and procedural law customs unique to local customary law that would have been foreign to the Grand Duchy.
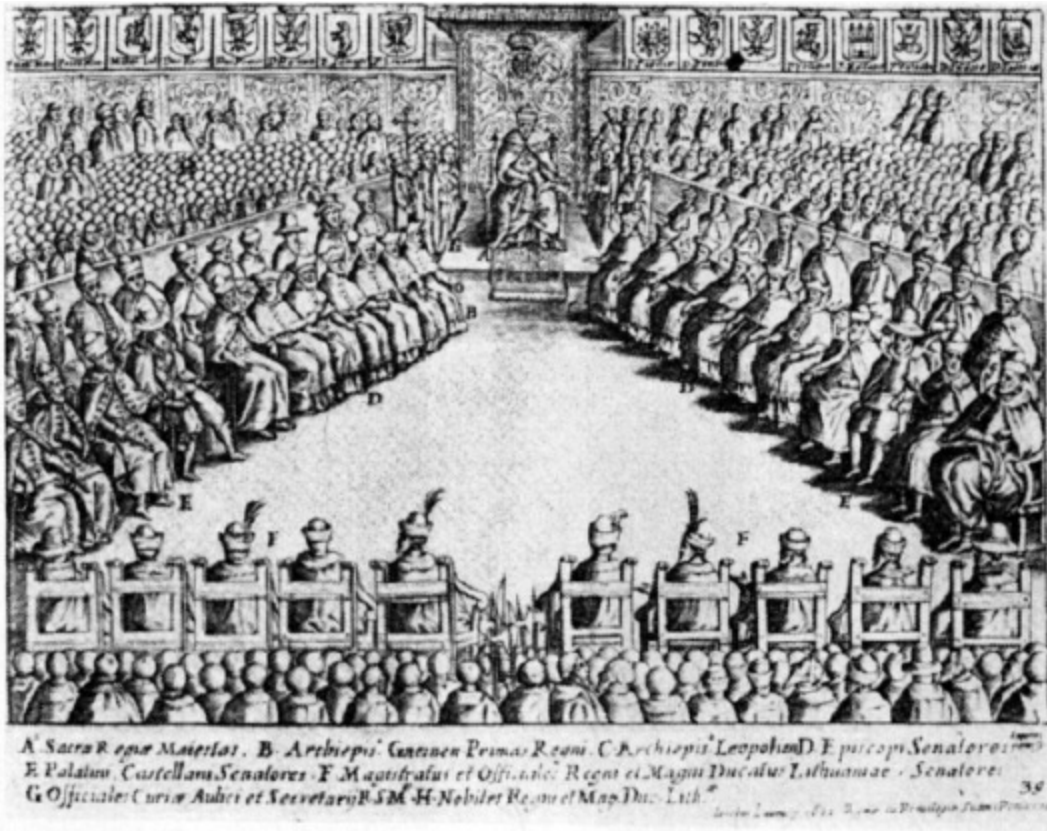
Crown Sejm during the reign (1548–1572) of Sigismund II Augustus (Jan Herburt, 1570).

Chapter 23

The spread of Protestantism in Lithuania. The reasons for its rapid success. The influence of the Protestant Reformation on the 1569 Union of Lublin. The preparation of the Union and the Warsaw recess. The external status of the Grand Duchy leading up to 1569. Polish-Lithuanian relations during the 14th, 15th, and 16th centuries. The various regions of the Grand Duchy and their views on a Polish-Lithuanian union.

During the 15th century and the first half of the 16th, the political influence of Poland, which resulted in the establishment of a government structure in Lithuania nearly identical to that of

Poland, encouraged a dynastic union of the two nations that historically fluctuated between having different rulers and being united under the same one. The intent of the Poles to conclusively draw the Grand Duchy into a union with the Polish crown, however, was met with significant resistance from Lithuania proper and Lithuanian Rus' up until the middle of the 16th century. During the 16th century, the circumstances of the time weakened this resistance and served to promote a Polish-Lithuanian union.

Specifically, it was the religious schism in Western Europe and the Protestant Reformation that had a considerable impact on the historical development of Western Europe, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and the Grand Duchy's possessions in the lands of Rus'. To strengthen dynastic ties between Lithuania and Poland, the Polish government, together with the Polish clergy, began missionary efforts as early as the beginning of the 15th century to spread Catholicism throughout Orthodox Lithuanian Rus'. These efforts culminated under the rule of Casimir IV, resulting in increased resistance from the lands of Rus'. Subsequently, by the end of the 15th century, the Grand Duchy began to disintegrate, with certain Rus'ian and even Lithuanian Orthodox dukes and princes leaving their positions in Lithuania to defect to the Grand Principality of Moscow.

The Reformation dramatically changed this state of affairs. Protestant theology was welcomed in Poland, in part because of Poland's close ties to Germany. Protestantism was also quickly accepted in Prussia. In 1525, the Prussian Teutonic Order, led by Grand Master Albert, separated from the Roman Catholic Church. Having converted to Lutheranism, Albert accepted the title of duke of Prussia and began a missionary campaign that spread Protestantism throughout Lithuania. Before long, Protestant texts began appearing in the native Lithuanian vernacular.

Protestantism entered into Lithuania from Prussia and Poland, rapidly spreading throughout the lands of the Grand Duchy. Two factors greatly facilitated this phenomenon. First, Lithuanian nobles frequently visited other nations. For example, a large number of Lithuanian youths studied at foreign universities—such as those of Germany, France, and Italy—avoiding the Polish University of Kraków. Second, Lithuania was closely tied to Germany and Prussia through commerce. Lithuanian merchants often traveled to Germany, while foreign merchants, primarily Germans and Italians, filled major Lithuanian cities by the end of the 15th century and the beginning of the 16th.

The first Protestant reformers in Lithuania were Stanislovas Rapolionis and Abraomas Kulvietis. The latter, born into a Lithuanian noble family, was educated at several German universities. In 1539, Kulvietis returned to Lithuania, where he began proselytizing Lutheranism. As a result of his missionary efforts, Kulvietis was exiled from the Grand Duchy through an edict issued by Sigismund I in 1542. After Kulvietis's departure from Lithuania, another Protestant reformer and prominent Lutheran apologist, a German priest named Winkler, successfully continued Kulvietis's missionary work.

Calvinism was even more rapidly accepted across Lithuania as a direct consequence of the tremendous support that Mikołaj "the Black" Radziwiłł—a powerful government administrator, influential magnate, and cousin of Queen Barbara Radziwiłł—contributed to this particular belief system. After encountering Protestantism during his travels to foreign nations, Mikołaj Radziwiłł became an ardent supporter of the Reformation and began working to spread Protestant teachings throughout the Grand Duchy. The following statistic can be used to underscore the prevalence of Protestantism in Lithuania: by the middle of the 16th century, across the 700 Catholic parishes of Lithuania, only about

one tenth of one percent of the parishioners remained Catholic—the rest had converted to Protestantism.

A number of different factors contributed to the rapid spread of Protestantism throughout Lithuania. First, Catholicism had only been recently introduced to the lands of the Grand Duchy and thus had not yet taken firm root among the general population. This was further compounded by the fact that the Catholic clergy did not speak the Lithuanian language, a fact that alienated many Lithuanian Catholics. Second, the Catholic Church was in a state of decline during this time period, primarily because of its controversial and poorly educated clergy. Third, the Lithuanian elite greatly respected foreigners and strove to emulate their customs. Fourth, the ideology of the humanist movement[211] had become widely accepted by Lithuanian magnates of the 16th century.

With an influx of new ideas and a gathering of great philosophical minds, which inevitably resulted in the decline of what became antiquated beliefs, even the most radical Protestant sects quickly found their way into the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, where they were warmly welcomed. The Italians, for example, whose teachings were substantially more radical than that of Martin Luther and John Calvin—as they denied almost all classical Christian theology—introduced Anabaptism and Socinianism to Lithuania.[212] It is important to note that Protestant teachings became "fashionable" among the Lithuanian aristocracy, representing scholarship and a high level of competency with regard to modern trends.

By the beginning of the second half of the 16th century, the vast majority of Catholic nobles had already converted to Protestantism. As a result, a number of Orthodox magnate families of Lithuanian Rus', such as the Wiśniowiecki and Chodkiewicz families, also

converted to Protestantism. Religious diversity within the Grand Duchy of Lithuanian reached its peak under the rule of Sigismund II.[213] So it was that the once-prominent Catholic faith became at that time virtually eliminated within the Grand Duchy, as even the most fervent supporters of Catholicism had either abandoned their faith or begun to follow the path to apostasy. Although Catholic bishops and priests maintained superficial ties to the papacy, many were vocal supporters of Protestant ideology, demanding major reforms within the Catholic Church.[214]

The great success of the Protestants in Lithuania undoubtedly facilitated the establishment of the 1569 Union of Lublin. Furthermore, Protestant influences significantly weakened the zeal of Catholic missionary work within the lands of Lithuanian Rus'. Raised under the influence of many new ideologies, Sigismund II Augustus was not interested in religious clashes. Instead, he promoted religious diversity. Although he was a Catholic, Sigismund II Augustus supported the various Protestant movements and expressed a favorable attitude toward Orthodoxy. As the Catholic missionary efforts that were once supported by previous rulers began to dwindle, the animosity of the Orthodox population of Lithuania toward the Polish Crown began to disappear as well. This dramatic change in the attitude of the general population of Lithuanian Rus' presented the perfect opportunity for the establishment of a strong political union between Lithuania and Poland.

Sigismund Augustus was growing older, yet he remained childless. The Jagiellon dynasty, along with the dynastic union between Lithuania and Poland, was therefore bound to die out. As long as the Catholic missionary campaigns, which were supported by the Polish government, continued to be promoted within the lands of the Grand Duchy, the Orthodox population of Lithuanian

Rus'—which comprised approximately 80% of the total population of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania—would not even consider a continuation of the union with Poland. As a result, the future of Polish-Lithuanian relations was uncertain. Because of the religious tolerance and good-natured indifference of Sigismund Augustus, however, the Orthodox population no longer feared unwanted inroads being made by Catholicism from Poland. Only the Lithuanian aristocracy continued to resist a union with Poland, since its members feared losing their power to the Polish szlachta.

It is important to note that it was precisely for this reason that the Orthodox magnate families of Lithuanian Rus' supported a permanent political union with Poland. Thus, while meticulously preparing for the union, Sigismund Augustus issued a charter to the Orthodox nobility of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in 1563 to further bolster their support, granting them rights equal to that of the Roman Catholic Polish szlachta. Sigismund Augustus employed other tactics as well. During the 1564 Sejm of Warsaw, which was also attended by representatives of the nobility of Lithuanian Rus' led by Mikołaj "the Black" Radziwiłł, Sigismund Augustus renounced his hereditary rights to the Lithuanian crown, transferring them to Poland. In this way, Poland seemingly inherited the Lithuanian crown.[215]

During the same Sejm, it was suggested that both nations join together to form a single state with a common ruler and a common Sejm. It was also resolved that all other details concerning the union would be discussed during the following Sejm. This decision to postpone, known as a "Recess of the Sejm" (later known as the "Warsaw Recess")[216]—announced on March 13, 1564—was met with great protest from the Lithuanian delegates, a number of whom, including Mikołaj Radziwiłł, defiantly departed from the Sejm. The following sessions of the Sejm in Vilnius (1564), Warsaw

(1564), Brest (1565), and Lublin (1566) were also unable to achieve a resolution to the matter of Polish-Lithuanian union.

At all the above Sejms, the principal opponent to a union between Lithuania and Poland was Mikołaj Radziwiłł. In 1566, however, Mikołaj Radziwiłł died, depriving the Lithuanian faction in opposition to the union of its most influential supporter of Lithuanian sovereignty. Furthermore, the Grand Duchy was also experiencing heightened pressure from foreign military powers. The tsar of Moscow continued to send military campaigns into the eastern lands of the Grand Duchy, successfully advancing to the very border of Lithuania. Meanwhile, the Tatars continued to ravage the lands along the southern border of the Grand Duchy. Additionally, having occupied Estland,[217] the Swedes posed a threat to Lithuania from the north. It quickly became evident that, relying on its own defenses, the Grand Duchy would be unable to withstand onslaughts from its neighbors. Lithuania needed money, military resources, and troops—simply stated, support—that under the circumstances, only Poland could provide.

Relations between Lithuania and Poland during the 14th and 15th centuries were markedly unstable. The first Polish-Lithuanian union was founded with the goal of defending against a common enemy: the Teutonic and Livonian Orders. This fight against the German knights, however, was not always of equal interest to both parties to the union. In fact, this was precisely the reason why the Polish-Lithuanian union was so frail and unstable during the 14th and 15th centuries, frequently resulting in dissolution. For example, the Union of 1386 lasted only six years and resulted in the deposal of Jogaila from the Lithuanian throne by Vytautas, who subsequently ascended to that throne. Vytautas even entered into an alliance with the Livonian knights, not only acting independently of Poland, but in direct opposition to it. A renewed

union between Poland and Lithuania continued from 1401 until 1413, when it was once again confirmed in Horodło. Under Švitrigaila, Lithuania remained separate from Poland. In fact, a war even broke out between the two nations, resulting in Švitrigaila entering into a military alliance with the Teutonic Order.

With the election of Sigismund Kęstutaitis to the Lithuanian throne, the Polish-Lithuanian union was once again renewed in Vilnius in 1432. Not long thereafter, under the rule of Casimir IV, tensions once again began to build between the two nations, primarily because of a disagreement concerning rights to the lands of Volhynia and Podolia. Lithuania even began to prepare for another war with Poland, entering into an alliance with the Teutonic Order and requesting the support of its military forces. With the succession of Alexander Jagiellon to the Lithuanian throne, the Polish-Lithuanian personal union was once again interrupted. Only when Alexander Jagiellon was elected king of Poland in 1501, during the Sejm of Piotrków, was the personal union between the two nations renewed. From this point onward, the personal union between Lithuania and Poland would continue, uninterrupted, and the Poles would begin working to establish a permanent real union with Lithuania.

Not all regions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania welcomed the Polish-Lithuanian union of the 16th century, however. Although those in Volhynia and Podlachia supported the union, the residents —and especially the magnates—of Lithuania proper and Samogitia were opposed to it. These regional differences in attitude toward the union can be explained by the fact that the matter of Polish-Lithuanian union had vastly different implications across the various lands of the Grand Duchy.

For example, Lithuania proper—the most powerful region of the Grand Duchy—had an unfavorable attitude toward the union: Lithuania proper understood that as a result of the union, it would

lose its status as an independent and sovereign region. Southwestern Rus'—and especially the lands of Volhynia, Podolsk, and Podlachia—maintained a completely opposite perspective on the union. At the time, Volhynia suffered frequent Tatar invasions but was not impacted by the Muscovite–Lithuanian Wars.

Nonetheless, the Volhynian landowners were required to bear the full burden of the Muscovite–Lithuanian Wars through taxation and military conscription. Yet the Grand Duchy could not defend Volhynia from onslaught by the Tatars. The Grand Duchy focused its full attention on the fight with Moscow, as the greatest threat to the Grand Duchy's existence was posed by Moscow, rather than from Tatar invasion. Thus, Lithuania was required to organize well-coordinated systematic offensive attacks that could proactively defend the Grand Duchy from Moscow. As a result, the Grand Duchy could not provide Volhynia and Podolia with the necessary military support to defend against Tatar invasion. Thus, Volhynia and Podolia were more likely to receive the required aid through a union with Poland, as the Tatars were also a formidable threat to Poland's southern border.

Volhynian landowners were also impacted by frequent clashes with the Poles over rights to the lands along the Polish-Volhynian border. The residents of Volhynia believed that these various difficulties would be resolved through a union with Poland. The local issues of Podlachia also favored a union with Poland. The upper social classes of Podlachia had been completely polonized: Polish customary law and Polish institutions dominated the region. It was therefore not surprising that Podlachia supported a union with Poland. Furthermore, Podlachia had a large population of minor nobles, referred to as the "impoverished szlachta," who were burdened with military service and taxes as a direct consequence of Lithuania's fight with Moscow. These minor nobles hoped to find relief in a union with Poland.

Podolia, another region bordering Poland, experienced the same difficulties as Volhynia and also supported a union with Poland. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, the residents of Lithuania proper and Samogitia firmly opposed a union with Poland. In direct opposition to the Polonophilia of the outer regions of the Grand Duchy, the residents of Lithuania proper and Samogitia favored the annexation of Livonia as a means of strengthening the Grand Duchy's military forces while still maintaining Lithuania's sovereignty. As a consequence of Livonia's weak position on the international front, as it was actively being threatened by both Moscow and the Swedes, Livonia was successfully annexed by Lithuania in 1561 as a vassal-like state. The annexation of Livonia, however, did not yield the expected benefits for the Grand Duchy, as it was too weak to provide any military aid.

Together, these circumstances explain why, despite the increased efforts of the Poles, the establishment of a Polish-Lithuanian union met with such great resistance not only throughout the first half of the 16th century, but also throughout the 1560s as well. To finally resolve the matter, Sigismund II Augustus called the Polish-Lithuanian Sejm to assembly on December 23, 1568 in the city of Lublin. Because of the large number of expected attendees, the start of this Sejm was delayed until the beginning of January 1569.

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211 The humanist movement that developed during the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th was a response to the challenge of scholastic university education, dominated at the time by Aristotelian philosophy and logic.

212 Note: The Kiszka and Oleśnicki magnate families were ardent supporters of Socinianism. The essence of Socinianism, which is quite similar to Arianism, can be summarized as the rejection of the following three major Christian doctrines: Jesus Christ as the son of God, ancestral sin, and Divine Providence.

213 Note: By this time, there were approximately 80 different Protestant sects within the Grand Duchy.

214 Note: This religious upheaval, together with the Catholic clergy's need to survive as an institution, resulted in the Jesuits' arrival to Lithuania in 1569.

215 Note: Sigismund's transfer of hereditary rights to the Lithuanian crown to Poland did not have any legal implications, since the 1413 Pact of Horodło established an election-based system of succession within the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

216 Note: A "Recess of the Sejm" could be issued by the Sejm to postpone the final resolution of a matter until the assembly of the following Sejm.

217 Once occupied by the Swedes, the territory that comprised the northern parts of present-day Estonia was referred to as the Duchy of Estonia, or Swedish Estonia.

"Union of Lublin of 1569" by Jan Matejko, 1869 (from Wikipedia.org).

Chapter 24

The Lublin Sejm of 1569. Disagreement between the Lithuanians and the Poles. The departure of the Lithuanian delegates and the Polish king's response. The terms of the Union of Lublin. The aftermath of the Union.

From the very first Sejm assemblies, the Poles and Lithuanians disagreed on the matter of union between the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland. The Poles favored a real union[218] between the two nations, citing the Warsaw Declaration of 1563 as the basis for such a union. For Poland, a real union was highly favorable. All the Polish delegates supported a union in which Lithuania and Poland would join together, with Poland holding a dominating position relative to Lithuania. This vision for the union between Poland and Lithuania was not novel, as the

legislation of the preceding two centuries had already established a legal basis for such a union. Furthermore, the Polish delegates were supported by the king of Poland, who had the power to force the Lithuanian delegates into submission. Additionally, Poland was in a better position with regard to foreign affairs than Lithuania, as the latter was in the midst of a difficult defensive clash with Moscow and the Swedes along its eastern and northeastern borders.

Compared to Poland, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania[219] had far less bargaining power. This was primarily due to the lack of a common perspective on the matter of the union with Poland. The disagreement between the various Lithuanian delegates was the result of two factors. First, the interests of the szlachta of Lithuanian Rus', who saw the union as an opportunity to expand their privileges and increase their political influence, clashed with the interests of the upper nobility, who correctly anticipated that the union would reduce their power as a function of the sheer multitude of lesser nobles. Second, different regions of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania held conflicting views on the union. As mentioned earlier, Lithuania proper and Samogitia, fearing the loss of their political sovereignty and predominant position within the nation, were opposed to a union with Poland. In contrast, many of the lands of Lithuanian Rus' (especially Volhynia, Podolsk, and Podlachia) saw the union as an opportunity to improve their defenses against foreign military threats.

The Polish plan for union with Lithuania, developed by Bishop of Kraków Filip Padniewski, was highly Polono-centric and intended to incorporate Lithuania into Poland, while only appearing to allow Lithuania to retain its sovereignty. The Polish plan for union included three terms that would significantly restrict Lithuanian independence. First, a common monarch was to be elected during an assembly of the General Polish-Lithuanian Sejm

in Warsaw, with the coronation to be held in Kraków. Second, the Senate and the Sejm were to resolve all matters under consideration, without exception. Third, both a common currency and customs border were to be established.

In response to these Polish demands, which they regarded as unreasonable, the Lithuanian delegates presented their own plan for union, consisting of the following six terms. First, a common monarch was to be elected during a session of the General Lithuanian-Polish Sejm convened on the Lithuanian-Polish border. The elected monarch was to be crowned first with the Polish crown in Kraków, and then with the Lithuanian crown in Vilnius. Second, the General Polish-Lithuanian Sejm was only to resolve matters pertaining to both constituents, such as the election of a common monarch, the declaration of war and peace, and the establishment of tribute for military purposes. All other matters were to be resolved at separate Polish and Lithuanian Sejms. Also, the General Polish-Lithuanian Sejm was to alternate between Lithuania and Poland as the place of assembly. Third, Lithuania was to retain its existing currency. Fourth, Podolia and Volhynia were to remain under the Lithuanian crown, and the administration of government within the lands of the Grand Duchy was to remain outside of the control of the Polish crown. Fifth, only natives of the Grand Duchy were to be appointed to government positions within the lands of Lithuania. Sixth, Livonia was to remain under Lithuanian control.[220]

The terms proposed by the Lithuanians were categorically rejected by the Poles. Nonetheless, the Lithuanian delegates simply separated from the Polish delegates and continued developing their plan for union. By the end of February, when it became clear that the Poles would not compromise, a large number of Lithuanian delegates unexpectedly departed from Lublin in an act of protest,

hoping to prompt Sigismund II Augustus to modify the demands of the Polish delegates. This act of defiance, however, did not lead to the result that the Lithuanian delegates had hoped for. Instead, the departure of the Lithuanian delegates allowed the Poles, who were now unopposed, to draft a plan for union to their own liking. Additionally, the Poles began pressuring specific individuals and groups to support their proposed terms of union.

The Poles were very successful in their efforts: after the departure of the Lithuanian delegates, the Sejm ruled to separate the lands of Volhynia and Podolia from Lithuania and "reunite" them with Poland. To this end, the king of Poland issued Universals[221] that, under the threat of land confiscation and the charge of contumacy,[222] forced the Podlachian and Volhynian senators and delegates to return to Lublin to take their oaths of office. Furthermore, the king of Poland gained the support of the two most influential magnates of Lithuanian Rus': Voivode of Kyiv Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski and Voivode of Volhynia Aleksander Fedorowicz Czartoryski.[223] Seeing the support of these two magnates, the rest of the upper nobility of Lithuanian Rus' followed suit. The lesser nobles, always gravitating toward the Polish szlachta, joyfully welcomed the proposed union.

After the annexation of Podlachia, Volhynia, Podolia, and Kyiv, the Lithuanians understood that in the long run, resistance would be futile. Having returned to Lublin, the Lithuanian delegates on June 27 agreed to all the terms of union proposed by Poland, with the exception of a few that significantly diminished Lithuania's dignity. For example, the Lithuanian delegates requested the removal of the contumacy clause, indicating that the clause makes it appear as though they were forced into accepting the union under the threat of being labeled as rebels. The Lithuanian delegates also requested that the use of the Lithuanian state seal be preserved

alongside that of Poland. Even these minor requests were denied by the king of Poland, however. In a grand ceremony on July 1, 1569, all delegates and senators in attendance swore acceptance of the union. After a number of insignificant logistical matters were resolved (e.g., the location of the assembly of the General Sejm, the issue of Livonia, and so on), the Sejm of Lublin finally adjourned on August 12, 1569. The Sejm was promptly divided into two chambers: the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies. The latter, serving as the representative body of szlachta democracy, would play a central role in the government of the Polish-Lithuanian state.

The Union of Lublin, which declared a permanent political union between Lithuania and Poland, instituting a definitive plan for the organization of government within the Polish-Lithuanian state, included the following 13 terms: (1) The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland were to combine into a single state—the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth—with a common monarch, elected during a session of the General Sejm. The coronation of the monarch was to take place in Kraków, with the monarch assigned the title of grand duke of Lithuania. Also, the separate election and coronation of a Lithuanian grand duke was to be discontinued. (2) The legislative authority was to be held by the General Senate and Sejm, both headed by the king. The Sejm was to consist of deputies elected by the szlachta, with two deputies representing each powiat. The Senate was to consist of the highest secular and religious authorities of both the Grand Duchy and the Kingdom of Poland. The individual Lithuania Sejms were to be abolished. (3) Common diplomatic relations with foreign nations were to be established. (4) A common currency was to be established for the two nations. (5) Common customs borders were to be established: all domestic[224] customs duties, including both land and river tariffs, with the exception of normal merchant

customs duties, were to be abolished. (6) All previous decrees and charters prohibiting Polish land ownership in Lithuania and Lithuanian land ownership in Poland were to be abolished. (7) Poles were to be allowed to hold government positions in Lithuania, with Lithuanians allowed to occupy government positions in Poland. (8) All fortresses and lands that were previously captured by Moscow were to be returned to either Lithuania or Poland, depending on which constituent controlled the possessions prior to their capture. (9) Livonia was to be placed under the joint authority of Lithuania and Poland. (10) The lands of Podlachia, Volhynia, Podolia, and Kyiv were to be transferred from Lithuanian control to that of Poland. (11) With respect to government administration on a regional level, both constituents of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were to remain autonomous. Both constituents were to retain their own regional government positions, troops, and laws. (12) Lithuania was to retain its own legal code, in accordance with the Lithuanian Statute. (13) The king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was to confirm the inviolability of all existing rights and privileges on the part of the szlachta, the upper social classes, various high-level government positions, the courts, and noble families.

In this way, the Poles finally achieved what they had been working toward for the past 200 years: the fusion of Lithuania with Poland and the Polish annexation of the resource-rich lands of Lithuanian Rus'. The 1569 Union of Lublin was accompanied by many important social, political, and religious changes not only for Lithuania, but for all of Eastern Europe. As Polish members of the szlachta and peasant-colonists began to settle, own land, and hold public office in Lithuania, native Lithuanians began to be displaced. Lithuanian cities, overflowing with Polish merchants and craftsmen, became centers of Polish influence, resulting in the rapid spread of Polish culture across Lithuania.

Although the influence of Polish culture, in and of itself, could be regarded as a positive and natural sign of progress, increased Polish influence resulted in several negative ramifications for Lithuania. Because Lithuanian culture was comparatively weak and underdeveloped, the cultural influence of Poland did not serve as a positive contributor to Lithuanian development, but resulted instead in the replacement of Lithuanian culture with the highly developed, yet foreign, culture of Poland. The Lithuanian nobility, submitting to the influence of Poland, began to gradually lose its unique national characteristics, increasingly adopting Polish customs and traditions. After the 1569 Union of Lublin, the language, morals, and customs of Poland became predominant among the members of the Polish-Lithuanian royal court, as well as the magnates and nobility of Lithuanian Rus'. By the end of the 16th century, the Polish-Lithuanian nobility conversed exclusively in Polish. Cities and villages had also become significantly polonized.

The process of polonization was catalyzed by the Catholic Counter-Reformation during the 1570s, as a result of increased Jesuit missionary activity throughout Lithuania. Thus, the Union of Lublin was almost entirely unfavorable for Lithuania. Polish military support, which had been the primary supporting rationale behind all previous attempts at Polish-Lithuanian union—including the Union of Lublin—turned out in reality to be insignificant. Furthermore, the final union between Lithuania and Poland allowed the Poles to pursue their own interests, using Lithuania to strengthen their position on the international stage, while ignoring Lithuanian interests. This involvement of Lithuania in the aggressive politics of Poland cost Lithuania an immense amount of financial resources and thousands of human lives. The financial instability and social disarray of Poland, spreading to Lithuania, contributed to the collapse of its social and governmental

organization. No longer an independent and sovereign nation, Lithuania was left defenseless against the growing influence of Poland. Without a distinct intelligentsia of its own, Lithuania became in effect another province of Poland, with which it would later share the same tragic historical developments.

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218 Note: Unlike a personal union, which only involves a union of the constituents under a common monarch, a real union entails a complete union of the constituents. Although the constituents of a real union retain a degree of sovereignty with respect to their individual domestic affairs, the constituents share a common monarch, legal code, and foreign policy.

219 Note: The representatives of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania at the Sejm of Lublin included the following notable individuals: Grand Chancellor of Lithuania and Voivode of Vilnius Mikołaj "the Red" Radziwiłł, starosta of Samogitia Ivan Chodkiewicz, Deputy Chancellor of Lithuania and starosta of Brest Eustachy Wołłowicz, Voivode of Kyiv Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski, Voivode of Volhynia Aleksander Fedorowicz Czartoryski, and Voivode of Bracław Prince Roman Fedorovich Sanguszko.

220 Note: In 1566, the Duke of Courland, who had previously governed Livonia, was replaced by a Lithuanian deputy with the title of Hetman and Administrator of the Livonian Land. Additionally, it was established that the senators and delegates of Livonia would attend the Sejm together with the Lithuanians. As a result, Livonia and Lithuania began a close and interconnected relationship that would last for many years.

221 Universal is a historical term referring to an official proclamation or legal act.

222 Note: Individuals were charged with contumacy if they were deemed unruly or rebellious, or did not appear when ordered to do so by the king or the courts, or they intentionally evaded the king or the courts while the specific matter necessitating the individual's participation was still unresolved.

223 Note: Voivode of Kyiv Prince Konstanty Wasyl Ostrogski was a powerful and influential ruler. Although he saw himself as a subject of the king, Ostrogski was wealthier and more influential than the king: under his dominion were 35 cities and more than 700 villages, from which he received a total of 10 million złoty in annual income.

224 "Domestic," in the sense of goods being transported between two points within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (intranational travel versus international travel).

Selected Chronology of Significant Events in Lithuanian History to 1569

1040 First mention of Lithuanians in the chronicles of Rus'

1112 Military incursions of Prince of Volhynia Yaroslav Sviatopolkovich into Lithuania

1201 Founding of the city of Riga by the Germans, under Bishop Albert

1202 The formation of the Order of Livonian Brothers of the Sword

1204–1239 Legendary reign of Ryngold, uniting Lithuanian duchies for the first time

1231 Arrival of the Knights of the Teutonic Order in Poland

1235 Victory of Ryngold over the Russian Princes in Mogilno

1237 Absorption of the Livonian Order by the Teutonic Order

1239–1263 Reign of Mindaugas, first as grand duke and then (from 1253) as king of Lithuania, known for various state-building accomplishments

1250 Founding of the city of Kernavė, sometimes known as the first capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, approximately 39 kilometers (24 miles) northwest of Vilnius

1251 Catholic baptism of Mindaugas, believed to have been done in exchange for Pope Innocent IV's support for the crowning of Mindaugas as king of Lithuania

1253 Coronation of King Mindaugas, the only Christian king of Lithuania

1259 Transfer of Samogitia to the Teutonic Order

1260 Defeat by the Samogitians of the joint forces of the Teutonic Knights and the Livonian Order in the Battle of Durbe.

1263 Beginning of Christian crusades against pagan Lithuania and of a dark period following the death of Mindaugas

1263–1264 Reign of Treniota (one of two nephews of Mindaugas), as grand duke of Lithuania

1264–1267 Reign of Vaišelga (a son of Mindaugas), as grand duke of Lithuania

1267–1269 Reign of Shvarn, as grand duke of Lithuania, who together with Vaišelga had deposed Treniota in 1264

1271–1282 Reign of Traidenis, as grand duke of Lithuania, who expanded the Grand Duchy into the territories of Sudovians and Semigalians

1282–1295 Reigns of Daumantas (1282-1285), Butigeidis (1285-1290), and Butvydas (1290-1295), all as rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

1295–1316 Reign of Vytenis, as grand duke of Lithuania, the first of the Gediminid dynasty to rule for a substantial length of time

1316–1341 Reign of Gediminas, the first to unite the lands of Lithuanian-Rus', as grand duke of Lithuania

1320 Annexation of the Ruthenian Principality of Vitebsk; Founding of the cities of Lida and Trakai

1323 Founding of the city of Vilnius by Gediminas

1325 Annexation of Volhynia

1331 Defeat of the Teutonic knights during the Battle of Płowce

1341–1345 Fragmentation of the Lithuanian state through the rise of regional self-governance

1345–1377 Reign of Algirdas (one of the seven sons of Grand Prince Gediminas), as grand duke of Lithuania, who together with the help of his brother Kęstutis created an empire stretching from the present Baltic states to the Black Sea and to within 80 kilometers (50 miles) of Moscow

1345–1382 Reign of Kęstutis as duke of Trakai (a subdivision of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania during the 14th and early 15th centuries), who defended the western border of the Duchy

1356 Annexation of the Principality of Chernigov, one of the largest states within Kievan Rus', for a time the second most important after Kiev

1362 Defeat of the Tatars during the Battle of Blue Waters; Annexation of Podolia and the Principality of Kyiv

1377 Recognition of Algirdas's son, Andrei, as the Prince of Pskov by the inhabitants of Pskov

1377–1434 Reign of Jogaila, the first Lithuanian-Polish monarch, first as grand duke of Lithuania and then as king of Poland (from 1386)

1379 Signing of truce between Jogaila and the Teutonic Order and the formation of a secret coalition against Kęstutis

1380 (31 May) Meeting between Jogaila and Grand Master of the Teutonic Order Winrich von Kniprode, during which they signed the secret Treaty of Dovydiškės

1383 (21 October) Baptism in the Catholic rite of Vytautas (aka Vytautas the Great)

1384 (30 January) Signing of truce between Jogaila and Vytautas, in the form of the Treaty of Königsberg, marking the end of four years of civil war

1385–1386 Unfolding of events leading to the Union of Krewo (aka the Act of Kréva)

1387 Official adoption of Christianity by Lithuania, the last pagan country in Europe; Establishment of Magdeburg rights in the city of Vilnius

1388 Granting of special privileges to the Hanseatic merchants by Vytautas; Granting of special privileges to the Jews of Trakai and Brest by Vytautas

1389 Granting of special privileges to the Jews of Grodno by Vytautas

1392 Recognition of Vytautas as the sovereign grand duke of Lithuania

1398 Signing of the Treaty of Salynas, an initial attempt to enforce the cessation of Samogitia; Execution of the first military campaign against the Tatars by Vytautas

1399 Execution of the second military campaign against the Tatars by Vytautas and the defeat of his forces during the Battle of the Vorskla River

1401 Passage of the Lithuanian-Polish Pact of Vilnius and Radom, a set of three acts

1404 Annexation of the Principality of Smolensk, a Kievan Rus' lordship from the time of the 11th century

1408 Conclusion of a peace treaty with Moscow, signed at a site along the Ugra River

1410 (15 July) Defeat of the Teutonic Knights (crusaders) by joint Lithuanian-Polish forces during the Battle of Grunwald (aka the Battle of Žalgiris)

1411 (1 February) Signing of the First Peace of Thorn treaty, formally ending the Polish-Lithuanian-Teutonic War

1413 (2 October) Signing of the Union (aka Pact) of Horodło, as a set of three acts; Christianization of Samogitia, the last ethnic region of Lithuania to become Christianized

1422 (27 September) Signing of the Treaty of (Lake) Melno, ending the Gollub War

1429 Convening of the Congress of Lutsk during a 13-week period beginning on January 6

1430–1432 Reign of Švitrigaila, as grand duke of Lithuania, most of whose life was devoted to largely unsuccessful dynastic struggles against his cousins Vytautas and Sigismund Kęstutaitis

1431 Signing of a two-year truce among Poland, Lithuania, and the Teutonic Knights

1432 Abandonment of the originally scheduled Congress of Parczew, intended to create a permanent peace treaty between

Lithuania and Poland; Establishment of the Union of Grodno, between Lithuania and Poland

1432–1440 Reign of Sigismund Kęstutaitis (the son of the Grand Duke of Lithuania Kęstutis and his wife Birutė), as grand duke of Lithuania

1440–1492 Reign of Casimir IV Jagiellon, grand duke of Lithuania from 1440 and king of Poland from 1447

1441 Granting of special privileges to the Jews of Trakai by Casimir IV Jagiellon

1447 Ascension of Casimir IV Jagiellon to the Polish throne

1457 Issuance of charter to the nobility of Lithuanian-Rus' and implementation of the institution of serfdom (by prohibiting peasant migration)

1468 Adoption of the legal code of Casimir IV Jagiellon, the first attempt to codify the laws of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (approved the same year by the Lithuanian Council of Lords)

1492–1506 Reign of Alexander Jagiellon, elected grand duke of Lithuania on the death of his father (in 1492) and king of Poland on the death of his brother John I Albert (in 1501)

1493 Secession of the cities of Mtsensk, Lyubutsk, Khlepen', and Rahachow—among others—from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

1495 Expulsion of the Jews from Lithuania by Alexander Jagiellon (reversed by decree in 1503)

1500 The Battle of the Vedrosha River and the loss of a number of possessions in the lands of Smolensk and Chernigov

1501 Ascension of Alexander Jagiellon to the Polish throne; Proposal of the Union of Mielnik (in reality, an act, which was never actually ratified)

1503 Signing of a six-year truce with Moscow, following a period of war from 1500–1503

1506–1548 Reign of Sigismund I the Old, king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania

1514 Victory over Vasili III Ivanovich of Russia during the Battle of Orsha

1522 Signing of a five-year truce with Moscow, subsequently extended to 1534

1526 Ascension of Sigismund II Augustus to the Lithuanian throne

1529 Entry into force of the first edition of the Lithuanian Statute, with the main purpose of standardizing and codifying various tribal and customary laws into a single document

1535 Issuance of the Sejm decree affirming *szlachta* rights

1537 Signing of peace treaty with Moscow, following the Muscovite–Lithuanian Wars

1548–1572 Reign of Sigismund II Augustus (the only son of Sigismund the Old), as king of Poland and grand duke of Lithuania

1559 Signing of the first Treaty of Vilnius between Lithuania and Livonia

1561 Signing of the second Treaty of Vilnius and annexation of Livonia by Lithuania
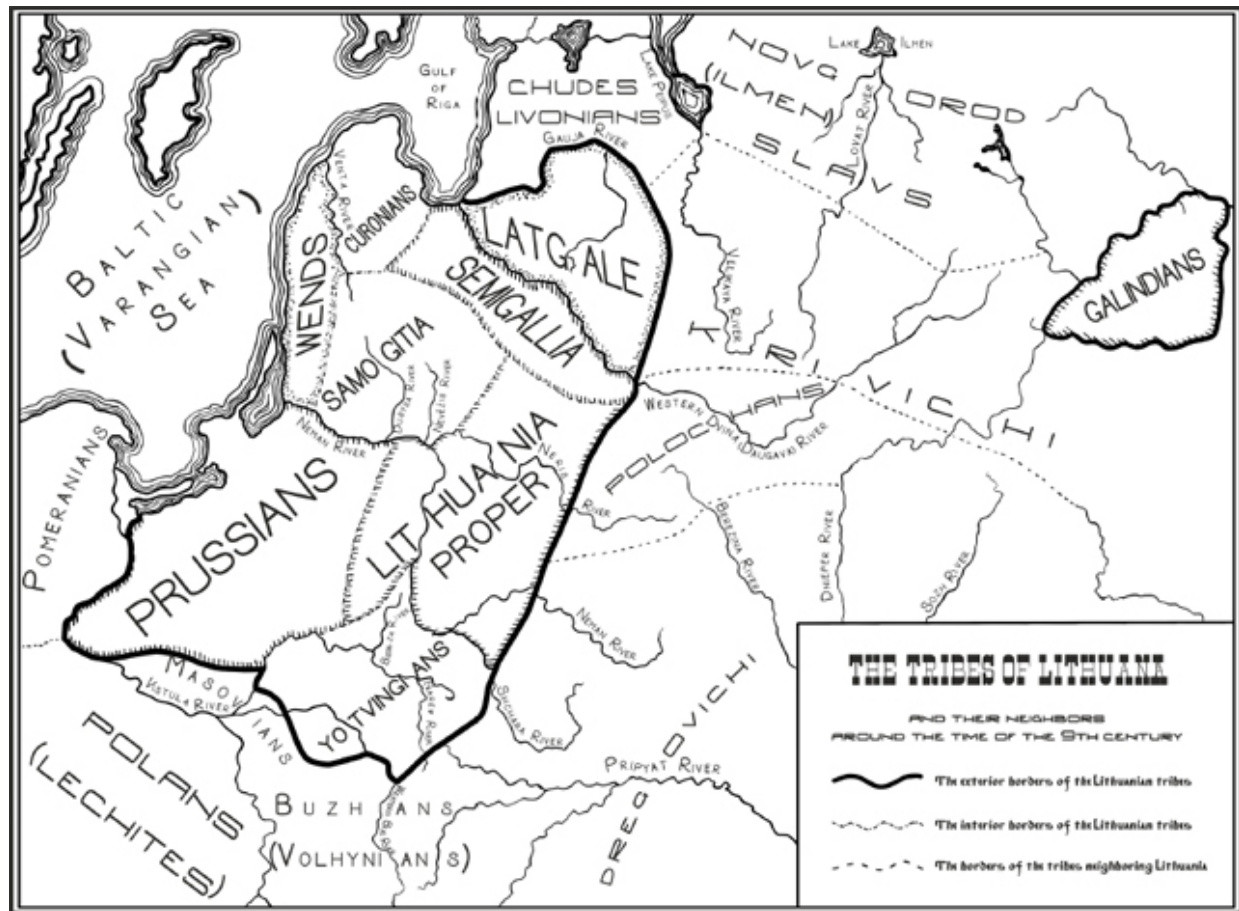
1564–1565 Implementation of various political reforms (involving the Sejm and the judiciary)

1566 Entry into force of the second edition of the Lithuanian Statute, making equal the rights of Orthodox Christians and Catholics
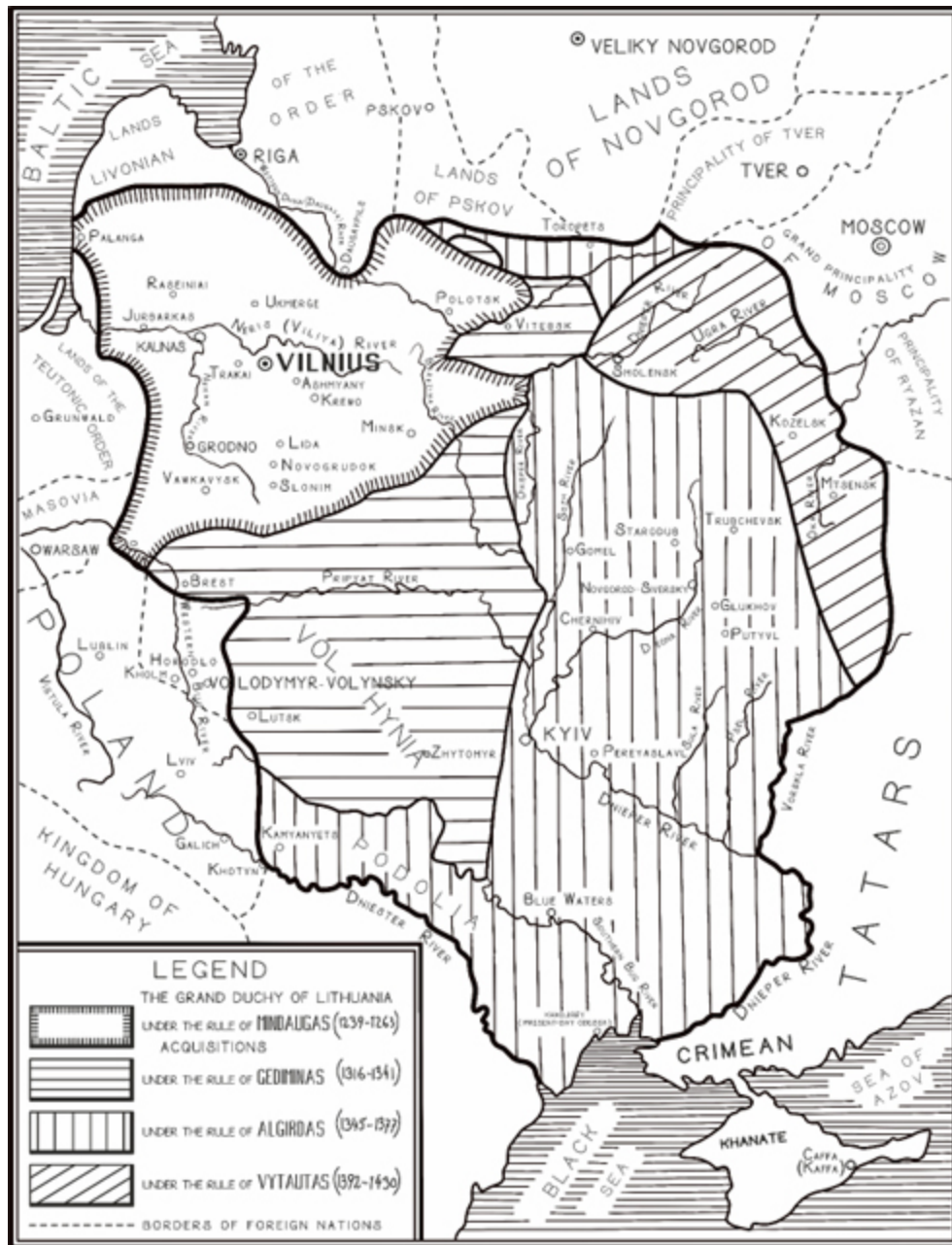
1568 Convocation of the Sejm of Lublin for the establishment of a union

1569 (1 July) Signing of the historic Union of Lublin, a pact between Poland and Lithuania creating a single state—the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, one of the largest countries in Europe at the time

MAP 1: THE TRIBES OF LITHUANIA and their neighbors around the time of the 9th century

MAP 2: The Expansion of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania From the Beginning of the 13th Century to the First Half of the 15th Century

MAP 3: Territorial Losses of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania From the End of the 15th Century to the Second Half of the 16th Century

Appendix I
The Public and Legal Status of Jews in Lithuania Prior to the Union of Lublin

The ancestry of Lithuanian Jews and their settlement in Lithuania. The status of Jews under Vytautas the Great. The strengthening of the Jewish community under Casimir IV. The Jewish exile under Alexander Jagiellon and its causes. The return of the Jews to Lithuania. The status of Jews under Sigismund I and Sigismund II Augustus. Jewish community organization at the time of the Union of Lublin. Hostilities between the szlachta and the Jews. Later development and strengthening of Jewish community organization based on religious foundations.

The historical data regarding the first appearance of Jews in Lithuania are quite limited. The first reliable sources, dating back to the 8th century, indicate that Jews served as the middlemen in commerce between the lands of Southern Rus' and the Baltics. Commercial activities in this region were concentrated in Gdańsk, Wolin (also referred to as Vineta, in Pomerania), and other cities located on the Vistula, Oder, and Elbe Rivers.

A number of theories exists concerning the appearance of Jews in Lithuania. There is reason to believe that Jews arrived in Lithuania as a result of the fusion of two migrant streams. The earlier of the two streams emanated from the East—Armenia, Crimea, the Caucasus, and Bosphorus—where Jews lived since the very beginning of the Christian era. The second migrant stream, associated with a much later time period (the 12th century), fled Western Europe to escape persecution during the Crusades. The blending of these two streams was a very slow process that lasted through the 18th century.[225]

Originally, Jews lived mainly in central Lithuania. After the military campaigns of Gediminas and his conquest of the Kyivan and Volhynian lands, however, Jews began to migrate to the northern parts of the nation. There is historical evidence that these migrants, enjoying considerable wealth, were able to acquire a significant amount of power in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and quickly took on prominent positions in their communities. Thus, Jews played a central role in the establishment of new cities and the development of already existing ones, especially under the rule of Gediminas, who was notable for the extent of his religious tolerance.

Little is known about the status of Lithuanian Jews during the period that followed, up to the beginning of the rule of Vytautas the Great (in 1392). At this time, only the Jews living in major cities—such as Brest, Grodno, and Lutsk—had a substantial community structure. The Jewish populations of minor cities and towns, in contrast, were comparatively poor and not as sophisticated. For this reason, they lacked the same level of community organization.

Considerable time and effort were devoted by the Jewish migrants spread out across all of Lithuania toward establishing a well-formed community structure and encouraging the grand duke to recognize their rights. Among other factors that catalyzed this process, it is important to underscore the cultural influence that the Polish Jews (who were better educated and, in that sense, more advanced) had on their Lithuanian brethren. Vytautas the Great, a sagacious and unusual ruler, quickly and correctly identified the important role that the Jewish people would play in the improvement of the welfare of the Grand Duchy. With this in mind, he granted a whole host of rights and privileges to them.

The first to receive these privileges were the Jews in Trakai (on June 14, 1388), followed by those in Brest (on July 1, 1388) and Grodno (in 1389). According to these charters, which were based on

the privileges granted to the Polish Jews by Bolesław the Pious and Casimir III the Great, Lithuanian Jews were citizens of the Grand Duchy, required to comply with major rulings and orders of the grand duke. In all minor judicial matters, however, they were a free people, equal to the szlachta, and were therefore entitled to present their legal issues before the local court presided over by the local government official. It was the duty of this judge to preserve the inviolability of the Jews, their freedoms, their possessions, and their religious practices.

At the same time, Jewish communities already began to enjoy significant autonomy. For example, the Jewish community was in charge of independently resolving all court cases in the realm of civil law (if they chose to do so, the parties involved could still ask for the local government official to hear their case). Aside from judicial power, Jewish communities were also given other powers. One notable power was the authority to remove from the community an individual deemed to be "suspicious," assigning that person the status of an outlaw (Vogelfrei).[226]

The development of Lithuanian Jewish community governance, which organized the Jewish population into districts based on the location of the local synagogue or cemetery, was founded upon the Jewish privileges that confirmed their right to transport the dead without any interference, placing Jewish cemeteries under the protection of the grand duke and the synagogues under the supervision of the starosta. With regard to individual rights, Jews shared the same level of immunity as the members of the szlachta.[227]

The religious freedom of Lithuanian Jews was protected in two major ways. First, specific penalties were established for interrupting Jewish worship services and for vandalizing Jewish cemeteries. Second, it was forbidden to force Jews to satisfy any

outstanding debts or to respond to any other requests on the Sabbath or during their religious holidays. Furthermore, using past papal decrees as a guide, blood libel[228] was prohibited and a special judicial procedure was established to deal with such false accusations.[229]

The various privileges granted to the Jews in Lithuania at the end of the 14th century and the beginning of the 15th by Vytautas the Great involved protection of a rights in a wide range of areas: the inviolability of life (to the same degree enjoyed by the members of the szlachta), property, freedom of religion, transportation, migration, agricultural pursuits, and free trade (to the same degree enjoyed by the burghers).

The more prosperous Jews played a central role in Lithuanian government finances, serving as tax farmers.[230] A number of wealthy Jews owned large expanses of land—even small villages. A combination of factors encouraged Jews to own land: landowners were respected and held an elevated position in society, based on the principles of szlachta freedom and independence. Also, the government actively defended land possessions from external threats. While wealthier Jews owned land and served as landlords, poorer Jews—especially in northeastern Lithuania—until the middle of the 16th century, made their living in agriculture. It is important to note that, with the exception of a small number of wealthy tax farmers, the vast majority of Jews were quite poor, and during this period, wielded little economic or political influence.

The progressive strengthening of Jewish communities led to further advancements in communal rights under the rule of Casimir IV. A charter enacted by Casimir IV in 1441, intended for the Jews of Trakai, established new communal rights, granting Jews privileges that aligned closely with those outlined in the Magdeburg rights.[231] Through this charter, Jews were placed under

the direct rule of the Jewish wójt,[232] who was elected by his Jewish peers and confirmed by the grand duke, serving in this capacity for life. The extensive authority of the Jewish wójt, which granted the power to impose punishments and monetary penalties in all criminal and civil cases between Jews, prevented other officials from interfering in matters concerning the Jewish community. From this point onward, the authority of the Jewish community increased significantly: submission to the Jewish communal judicial system was no longer optional (as it had been under Vytautas the Great). Furthermore, the right to independently earn income was a significant financial benefit conferred during this period upon members of the Jewish community.[233]

The favorable treatment of Jews by Lithuanian rulers ended abruptly in 1495 when Grand Duke Alexander Jagiellon enacted a charter that ordered all Jews to immediately leave Lithuania.[234][235] There were three major reasons for this decree. First, Alexander Jagiellon, influenced both by the Catholic clergy and by his wife Helena of Moscow (the daughter of the grand duke of Moscow), adopted a rather extreme stance on religion. Second, the grand duke wanted to replace the Jews with Christians—specifically, the German settlers—as providers of financial services to the government. Third, the grand duke was plagued by financial troubles, owing large sums of money to Jewish tax farmers. By expelling the Jews, the grand duke not only in effect eliminated his debt, but also replenished his treasury with the confiscated possessions of those forced into exile.

Seeing that sufficient funding for the war with Moscow was still lacking, however, Alexander Jagiellon soon became disenchanted with his charter. After the exiled Jews presented the grand duke with extremely attractive conditions for their return, in 1503 Alexander Jagiellon annulled his charter. By mutual agreement,

then, the Jews were allowed to return to Lithuania under the following four terms and conditions. First, all exiled Jews were granted the right to return to their previous lands. Second, all possessions confiscated by the grand duke were to be returned to their original owners.[236] Third, all debts that were owed by the government prior to the exile had to be settled. Fourth, the Jewish community was required to annually assemble 1,000 horsemen for military service.[237] Furthermore, the Jewish community was required to pay large sums of money to local government officials. In this way, Jews were reinstated as legal residents of Lithuania. This collective exile, along with the cherished dream of returning to their homes, united all Lithuanian Jews in a way that would have been impossible prior to the exile, when each local Jewish community functioned independently.

This sense of unity was further bolstered by the rule of Alexander Jagiellon's successor: Sigismund I. Although he was a devout Catholic, Sigismund I did not hold radical ethnic or religious biases. Completely tolerant with regard to religious freedom, Sigismund I did not feel threatened by the growth and strengthening of Jewish communities, the most prosperous of which were located in Brest, Grodno, Trakai, Pinsk, Ostroh, Lutsk, and Tykocin. The members of these communities even enjoyed better legal privileges than burghers, despite encountering difficulties in exercising their rights. Nonetheless, apart from a limited number of wealthy tax farmers, Lithuanian Jews did not represent a formidable politico-economic force during this era.

Under the rule of Sigismund II Augustus, Jews were treated equally well. Following the same policies of religious tolerance and non-interference in religious matters, Sigismund II Augustus treated Jews with the same tolerance as he did Lutherans and Calvinists (the numbers of which were significantly large by this

time). Until the Union of Lublin (with very minor exceptions), Lithuanian Jews lived on state lands and enjoyed the protection of the grand duke.[238] The rights granted to the Jews did not differ much from those granted to the szlachta. More prominent Jews were assigned the title of "lord" in official documents—and in the same manner as the nobility, wore swords, gold chains, and rings inscribed with their coat of arms.

Far removed from strict Orthodox beliefs and religious conservatism, the Lithuanian Jewish community, up to the middle of the 16th century, was organized in the following way: Each local community was headed by an elder[239] who was elected to represent it.[240] Among other duties, these elders represented the local community by petitioning the grand duke to grant it particular rights and by answering on behalf of the local community in the courts. The role of these elders was not associated with the religious practices of the local community

With the rabbi presiding, the elders gathered to rule on all judicial issues between the Jews in a particular community (with the exception of particular cases that were presented before a deputy of the grand duke). All matters that were not religious in nature could be appealed before a deputy of the grand duke. If an adequate resolution was not reached, an appeal could be made before the grand duke himself. Appeals concerning religious matters could be made before a religious court, consisting of senior rabbis from various cities of the Grand Duchy. The rabbis of the court could send a guilty individual into exile or apply a wide variety of other punishments in accordance with Jewish laws and customs.

The religious court had the authority to resolve both religious matters and issues concerning rights and relations among Jews. All matters concerning relations between Christians and Jews were

handled by the "Jewish judge"—either the starosta or a deputy of the grand duke. It is important to note that prior to the Union of Lublin, Jews did not hold their religious court in high esteem. It was not uncommon for Jews to avoid the religious court altogether, instead using the public court system. Up to the middle of the 16th century, Lithuanian Jews did not have a sense of national unity, did not strictly follow Orthodox tradition, and did not recognize the possibility of intranational Jewish unity through the formation of one national community.

Heightened tension between Jews and the nobility could be observed during the middle of the 16th century, when relations became increasingly strained. Initially fueled by financial disputes and competition in trade, this enmity was further provoked by the Catholic clergy, who had just begun a campaign against heretics. The persecution of and bloody attacks on the Jews by the szlachta became so unbearable that in 1566, the grand duke issued a special decree that prohibited protests against the Jews, once again reaffirming that all accusations of "ritual murder" and host desecration were to be presented before the grand duke himself. The accused party would only be found guilty if the testimonies of three Christian and three Jewish witnesses were presented. The decree also reminded all citizens that if the accusation was found to be false, the accuser would receive the same penalty as a suspect that was found guilty: death. The possessions of the accuser bearing false witness would be confiscated and deposited into the treasury. The conflict between the szlachta and the Jewish people, however, culminated in the Lithuanian Statute of 1566: a legal code packed with right-infringing antisemitic policies.[241]

For a significant period of time, however, Sigismund II Augustus was able to freeze the antisemitic objectives of the szlachta, even repealing a whole host of right-infringing charters. The now

strengthened and formidable national Lithuanian Jewish community played a significant role in eliciting these changes. With the expansion of szlachta freedoms and a decline in the authority of executive power (associated with the development of distinct privileges applied to individual social classes and the triumph of the rule of force), the individual proved to be defenseless. For this reason, individuals turned to unions for support. Such unions were not only based on the outward commonality of shared nationality, but also the markedly stronger internal collective struggle. For Lithuanian Jews, this connection was made through unity of faith, which further strengthened their community structure. From Poland, Lithuania received Magdeburg rights, corporations, industry, and szlachta freedoms. But it was also from Poland that Lithuania received the Talmud, Jewish autonomy, and qahal (congregational) solidarity. Professor and historian Sergei Bershadski[242] characterized the role that religion played in the development of Lithuanian Jewish community structure in the following way:

"The Jews of Lithuania, weary from their long and arduous struggle, were faced with the question as to whether to be slaves or to be free. Without the support of a strong community, the individual Jew felt powerless. The community—relying on a religious foundation, the cornerstone of which was the Talmud—quickly became obedient to authority and protective of each and every one of its members. But these benefits were not without significant consequences for the individual: the freedoms of individuality, spirituality, and familial life were harshly and irrevocably limited by the community. Beyond the local community, however, what awaited the individual was not only spiritual, but physical slavery. The mind was dismayed and the heart trembled … but there was no choice … And above these

disquieted Lithuanian Jews, the holy Talmud spread its tenacious wings …."

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225 Note: Even at this time, differences in dialect, appearance, and given names existed.

226 Note: This community power was limited by the right of the "suspicious" individual to appeal, to the starosta, removal from the community.

227 Note: For example, the sentence for murdering a Jewish person was the death penalty, with the possessions of the murderer to be confiscated and deposited into the treasury. The penalty for physically harming a Jew or a member of the szlachta was identical: a payment for retribution was to be made to the victim.

228 Also known as ritual murder libel, blood libel is an antisemitic canard—dating from the Middle Ages—that falsely accuses Jews of murdering Christian children in order to use their blood as part of religious rituals, especially for Passover bread.

229 Note: The accusation of "ritual murder" could only be made with corroboration by three Christian and three Jewish witnesses. If the accusation was found to be false, the accuser would receive the same penalty as a suspect that was found guilty: death.

230 Tax farming was the primary system of tax collection in Lithuania. Through this system, the government assigned the right to collect taxes to private individuals in exchange for a fixed annual fee. This ensured that a greater number of citizens paid their taxes, as any difference between the amount collected and the fixed fee would come out of the tax farmer's pocket.

231 To reiterate a note presented in Chapter 10, Magdeburg rights constituted a set of town privileges first developed by the Holy Roman Emperor Otto I (r. 936–973), based on Flemish law regulating the degree of internal autonomy within cities and villages granted by the local ruler.

232 To reiterate a note presented in Chapter 19, the wójt (in Lithuanian, vaitas) was essentially equivalent to a starosta or village headman.

233 Note: Half of the income earned from trades such as beeswax production was used to benefit the community.

234 Ironically, the author of this book was within several years of its publication ordered by the government—under the dictatorship of Augustinas Voldemaras—to leave the country with his family within 24 hours, allowing for the confiscation of his business and property (for more details, please see the introduction).

235 Note: Although a small number of Jews headed toward Crimea, the vast majority landed in Poland. King John I Albert of Poland allowed these Jews to settle in cities located near the Polish-Lithuanian border.

236 Note: In the event that confiscated possessions had already been given to private parties, Jews were allowed to reclaim their possessions, with all expenses reimbursed by the government.

237 Note: This condition was repealed in 1514 and replaced by an annual tax paid to the government in the amount of 1,000 red złoty (gold coins). (As a point of reference, in the early 17th century, the annual working wage for an Englishman was the equivalent of approximately 1 red zloty.)

238 Note: The szlachta was not allowed to build synagogues on its own lands without prior authorization from the grand duke. This meant that all Jews after the exile lived on lands belonging to the Grand Duchy, a fact that involved a significant monetary advantage for the grand duke.

239 Note: The first use of this title was recorded in 1549.

240 These elders represented the communities in all external relations, in securing new privileges, and in the regulation of taxes. Such officials, acting in conjunction with the head rabbi, were—toward the middle of the 16th century—only referred to by the title "elder."

241 Note: The most jarring manifestation of antisemitic policy can be found in section 12 of the Statute: Jews were prohibited from wearing expensive clothing, silver and gold jewelry, swords, daggers, etc. Instead, they were forced to wear distinctive clothing—yellow hats for men and yellow kerchiefs for women—that would allow them to be spotted from a distance. (The practice of requiring Jews, along with other ethnic minorities, to wear badges identifying themselves as outsiders is said to have originated in Muslim-dominated countries in the early 8th century. The use of yellow for this purpose in Lithuania bears a striking similarity to later times, when from 1939–1944 Jews throughout Nazi-occupied Europe were forced to wear a badge in the form of a yellow star as a means of obvious identification.)

242 Sergei Aleksandrovich Bershadski (1850–1896), often believed to be but in fact not Jewish, was a pioneer in recording the history the Jews in Lithuania.

Appendix II
The Sejms[243] of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Their Origins

The concept of public participation in government and its development. The organization and authority of the oblast[244] sejms of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. The factors contributing to the rise of the General Sejm. The organization of the General Sejm. The limitations of the military sejms. The rule of the sejms. The sejm reform of 1565 and powiat sejms (sejmiks). The judicial function of the General Sejm. The legislative authority of the General Sejm. The assembly of the General Sejm. The preparation of resolutions by the General Sejm and "liberum veto." General remarks.

In ancient times, rulers needed to go beyond whatever assistance they could get from their council—to the members of the general public—in order to accomplish everything they sought to accomplish. In this way, public participation in governmental affairs was born in the form of veches, militias, and the assignment of various administrative roles. In later times, this public participation in government was a highly sought-after and cherished right of the people that limited the power of the rulers. In antiquity, however, this was a necessity, a *conditio sine qua non* (a necessary condition), brought on not as a preventative measure against the infringement of the rights of the people, but rather as a byproduct of the government's helplessness.

Initially, all people participated in government as a form of mutual support. But this could not continue without taking a serious toll on cultural development. A heightened interest in trade and industry began to lead people away from their governmental duties to pursue these interests full time. This shift resulted in the emergence of a social class solely dedicated to the administration of government.

Naturally, the members of this class possessed considerable wealth, which allowed them to turn their attention away from trade and industry as a means of sustenance, focusing instead on fulfilling the needs of the government. In other words, it was inevitable that the demands of an economy-based culture and government service would sooner or later lead to the specialization outlined above. The factors that contributed to the emergence of sejms in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania are similar to those that led to the establishment of veches in the lands of the Kyivan Rus'. Over time, these veches turned into szlachta sejms, primarily as a result of the aforementioned job specialization that was brought about by an interest in advancing industry and improving the administration of government.

The oblast sejm served as the prototype for the General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. To understand the development of the General Sejm, it is therefore important to first understand something about oblast sejms, which had two major responsibilities. First, they were tasked with electing the grand duke of Lithuania. Second, they were required to resolve issues pertaining to foreign policy and defense policy. This included setting the size of the army's conscripted forces, imposing taxes to pay for mercenaries, and forming alliances. These oblast sejms were also tasked with enacting legislation. For example, the szlachta charters that were issued prior to the compilation of the Lithuanian Statute were developed during sessions of the oblast sejms, with the full involvement of the szlachta. Furthermore, oblast sejms often examined judicial issues, in which case the grand duke would preside, although sometimes the szlachta would come to a resolution independently.

Having at least briefly covered the oblast sejms, it is important to note that the grand duke would normally preside, as long as he was in Lithuania and not Poland. With the growth of Lithuania and its

subjugated lands, the grand duke's participation gradually diminished. That being said, the grand duke would from time to time visit the lands under his dominion, thereby strengthening the ties between those lands and Lithuania.[245] In the event that the grand duke was not present during a session of an oblast sejm, he would send his delegates to determine the nature of the issues discussed there. Resolutions arrived at during such sejms were sent to the grand duke for approval. In addition to various church figures and secular authorities, local landowners also participated in the sejms. Among these landowners were princes, lords, boyars, and gentry.[246] The degree of participation varied, based on class: the wealthier members who owned large expanses of land were fully immersed in government service, whereas those with smaller possessions, involved in government administration for the very first time, played a much more passive role.

As previously mentioned, the oblast sejms outlined above were predecessors to the General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. That being said, the oblast sejms lacked a very important element: unity. By the end of the 15th century, when the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was in ever-increasing danger of attack by Moscow and the Crimean Tatars, unity was all the more important. It was at this time (i.e., 1492) that the first General Sejm was held, consisting of officials representing the various oblasts of the Grand Duchy.[247] Prior to the establishment of the General Sejm, the different oblasts were primarily united by the rule of the grand duke. With the formation of the General Sejm, the oblasts acquired a sense of national unity through collaboration in government. In this way, the individual oblasts of the Grand Duchy became closer to one another than ever before.

As mentioned above, the primary reason for the formation of the General Sejm was the urgent need for unity at a time when

Lithuania was under imminent threat of attack by the Muscovites and the Crimean Tatars. The need to survive as a nation led government leaders to focus their attention on defense, which turned out to exceed the capabilities of the Grand Duchy leadership. After the clash between Lithuania and Moscow, it became apparent that in order to withstand such external threats in the future, major changes to the structure of government would have to be implemented. The need for an authoritative and conclusive resolution to the issue of national defense could not be satisfied through the conventional oblast sejms, with each oblast inevitably formulating a different resolution to the matter at hand. Instead, this lack of national agreement with regard to defense policy could only be avoided through the assembly of a General Sejm.

The Polish-Lithuanian sejms that were intended to assemble prior to 1569 to discuss the defense of the union were established for the same reasons. The Polish-Lithuanian sejms, first established as a result of the 1413 Union of Horodło, never took root and thus assembled quite rarely. The truly conclusive and long-lasting establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian sejms occurred only in 1569. This too was prompted by the need for better, collaborative defense against Moscow[248]—a feat that could only be achieved through closer governmental ties between Poland and Lithuania. For this reason, it follows that the primary reason for the formation of the Polish-Lithuanian sejms was the need to protect the nation, while the objective of establishing a united legislative body and court was only secondary.

If the General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was formed in response to an external military threat, it follows that the members of the General Sejm were familiar with matters relating to national defense. First among these members was the grand duke,

whose participation in the General Sejm as the principal authority on matters of national defense was essential. Although the grand duke also served as a judge during sessions of the Sejm, this role was by far not his primary duty. During the era of the Polish-Lithuanian Union, the grand duke was sometimes unable to attend the General Sejm because of matters in Poland that kept him away from Lithuania for extended periods of time. Thus, the General Sejm sometimes convened in his absence. When this was the case, the grand duke still participated, albeit remotely, through written correspondence and his delegates. In this way, the grand duke could still ask for certain matters to be discussed by the Sejm, assign tasks to various members, and ratify the resolutions passed by the Sejm. However, the absence of the grand duke had a negative effect on the productivity of the assembly: the pursuit of personal and local interests by many members of the Sejm was left unchecked when he was not physically present.[249]

The grand duke, functioning both as the highest authority in government and as the supreme magnate[250] landowner (since all the lands, cities, and territories were under his jurisdiction), held considerable power and acted on his own accord: it was not uncommon for him to sternly deny the petitions of certain factions with which he was not in alignment. The grand duke and these factions opposed each other and often clashed in debates, though they usually reached a compromise. In this way, the resolutions produced by the Sejm were the product of a mutual agreement between the grand duke and individual members of the Sejm.

Second to the grand duke were Catholic bishops and various officials. In attendance at each Sejm were four Catholic bishops, voivodes,[251] the Chancellor and Hetman of the Grand Duchy[252][253], castellans,[254] two treasurers (one state and one public), court officers of the grand duke (i.e., equerry, sub-equerry, head tailor,

head waiter, and executive chef), marshals, cornets, starostas,[255] vicar territorial administrators, deputy governors,[256] mayors, and Orthodox bishops. All of these individuals were not always present at the Sejm: in fact, it is impossible to find a documented session of the Sejm during which all were in attendance.

It is also important to note that in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, it was common for one official to fulfill the duties of two or more positions. A person acting as a voivode, for example, could also act as the marshal, chancellor, hetman, and starosta for multiple powiats. As another example, an individual serving in the capacity of marshal could also function as a treasurer and vicar territorial administrator. Princes, lords, and the szlachta accounted for the largest subset of members of the General Sejm.[257] As these members were all obligated to take up arms and defend the nation if under attack, during wartime (or in the case of imminent attack), they were not allowed to participate in the Sejm.

From the end of the 15th to the middle of the 16th centuries, when armed conflicts were almost constant, it is easy to understand why some sessions of the Sejm had very limited participation and others were unable to convene altogether. Although the burghers,[258] peasants, Tatars, and Jews were not invited to participate in the General Sejm, they often appeared before the Sejm and the grand duke with petitions and complaints concerning their local and societal needs.[259] From the perspective of demographics, it should be noted that the majority of members of the General Sejm were from Lithuania proper and Žemaitija.[260] The number of Sejm members from Rus'ian lands of the Grand Duchy was quite limited. This issue was aggravated by the fact that these officials were sometimes unable to attend because of the long journey that would have to be made. More importantly, however,

their absence would leave their native lands defenseless, as defense was their primary obligation.

Although there are no historical documents that indicate the exact number of Sejm members in attendance, it is certain that before the reforms of the 1560s (when the composition of the General Sejm was standardized), the Sejm was attended in very large numbers. This was the result of two factors: all landowners were allowed to attend without exception (the use of representatives was not common at this time) and many of those present were there to resolve personal matters, mostly involving the courts. The Lithuanian government never imposed a limit on the number of participants in the Sejm. In fact, it was much more concerned with ensuring that the minimum number of officials was present at the Sejm, since the number of members in attendance directly corresponded to the amount of influence the resolutions of the Sejm carried.

It was exceedingly difficult to assemble the Sejm during wartime. This challenge was usually overcome through the assembly of the military to resolve urgent matters. In other words, military encampments became sejms. However, these military or encampment sejms operated under significant limitations. Aside from comparatively low levels of participation,[261] the assembly of such sejms often occurred at the expense of military interests. Additionally, these military sejms constituted a significant financial burden for landowners, who had to support themselves and the people they traveled with for an indefinite period of time, all depending on the number and complexity of matters that had to be resolved at the sejm.

These drawbacks of the military sejms led to the organization of a representative sejm system intended to free the military members from their legislative duties and allow sejms to convene without

disrupting military activities. Prior to 1565, there was no general law governing the organization of a representative sejm—only local resolutions can be found regarding this matter.[262] This was the case until the middle of the 16th century, when the threat of armed conflict intensified. As a result of continuous military campaigns, the landowners of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (who were obligated to serve in the military) spent almost all their time travelling or in military encampments. It should also be noted that as a result of the increased threat of war, the General Sejm had to become more active: instead of only meeting annually, assemblies were now to occur several times per year.

Under these circumstances, separating military interests from the objectives of the Sejm was the only way to ensure that both the military and the Sejm could function without interference. It was precisely this that was the driving force behind the sejm reform of 1565. Other factors, apart from military considerations, also contributed to the reform. First, the continuous warfare during the 1560s was accompanied by personal sacrifice and large expenses for landowners: participation in the Sejm also involved large expenses. Second, the invitation of all landowners to the Sejm inevitably reduced its authority. This was the result of disproportionate participation in the Sejm (when the number of landowners from one region present at the Sejm did not correspond to the population they represented) that limited its ability to accurately represent the will of the people. Even in those cases in which elected representatives of various oblasts were sent to the Sejm, there was no guarantee that they would get involved in certain matters. Elected representatives often cited the lack of clear instructions on what position to take as the reason for refraining from participation. It was therefore always difficult to reach a consensus during sessions of the Sejm. Third, it was not uncommon to find

that resolutions already passed by the Sejm were not enforced or adhered to. This dissent was prevalent among local landowners and a majority of the szlachta who were reluctant to accept certain resolutions adopted by the Sejm.

All the aforementioned limitations became especially apparent in the 1560s when intense fighting with Moscow and the Tatars required resolutions to be rapidly enacted and enforced. The reform of 1565, responding to the necessities of the time, improved the structure and organization of the sejm by establishing powiat sejmiks[263] (which were already commonplace in Poland). According to the reform of 1565, the General Sejm was to consist of princes and lords, who were to be invited individually, as well as state delegates, who were to be elected at the powiat sejmiks.

Powiat sejmiks, convened in the major city of each powiat,[264] were called by the grand duke to assemble four weeks prior to the commencement of the General Sejm. Powiat sejmiks were composed of local officials—bishops, voivodes, castellans, starostas, marshals, governors, and other officials of the voivodeship[265]—as well as princes, lords, and szlachta-landowners of a given powiat. Powiat sejmiks were unique in their function: issues concerning the entire Grand Duchy were first discussed at the powiat sejmiks prior to the assembly of the General Sejm. These topics were assigned by the grand duke through his deputies. The role of the deputies was not limited to simply delivering the written instructions of the grand duke. Rather, the deputies actively participated in debates, moderating conflicts and promoting national interests.

Two state delegates were elected from each powiat during the powiat sejmiks.[266] These state delegates. who received written instructions from the electorate, were granted the authority to represent their powiat at the General Sejm. However, this meant that the state delegates were to adhere to their written instructions

and could no longer avoid participating in the General Sejm as before. This also meant that the electorate could no longer protest the resolutions of the General Sejm that their state delegates were responsible for approving. It should also be noted that in particular cases, the powiat sejmiks were able to enact resolutions that applied to the entire nation. Sessions of the powiat sejmiks lasted for no more than three days because high-ranking officials and state delegates had to hurry off to the General Sejm. Thus, the reform of 1565 not only fulfilled the organizational objectives of the nation, but also served the interests of the szlachta.

Although the General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was not intended to serve as a major court system, many members did use the assembly of the Sejm as a means of presenting their judicial cases to the grand duke for resolution. As a result, many disputes involving members of the Sejm could not be brought before the local courts: up to the beginning of the 16th century, these members had all their legal matters brought before the grand duke. Additionally, there were a significant number of legal matters that were completely out of the local officials' jurisdiction. These, too, had to be settled by the grand duke (see Chapter 20). Also, no individual was barred from approaching the grand duke with judicial matters; the grand duke often presided over cases that citizens did not want to present to their local courts and over appeals made by individuals to overturn the decisions of their local courts.

Often, the only opportunity that citizens had to present their cases to the grand duke was at the General Sejm. For this reason, the Council of Lords (the advisory council of the grand duke) and local landowners (who as a category tended to be well-versed in their local laws) were present at the Sejm, in order to facilitate the resolution of complex and challenging cases. By combining the courts with the assembly of the General Sejm, citizens could avoid

additional expenses, by not having to make separate trips to the grand duke just to get their judicial matters resolved.

As a result, the number of cases that needed to be resolved sometimes overwhelmed the Sejm. This required the attention of the grand duke and the Council of Lords, thereby distracting them from resolving matters that directly concerned the Sejm. To counter this, certain measures were implemented to offer other means of accessing the courts: cases were often postponed, special judicial committees were established, and—most importantly, beginning in 1529 in Vilnius—special sessions of the Sejm were convened for the sole purpose of considering legal matters.

The General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania can be characterized by seven major issues that were typically resolved through its assembly. First, the General Sejm was responsible for electing the grand duke. Second, the General Sejm set the term of compulsory military service, the total number of conscripts, and how long particular military regulations remained in effect. Third, the General Sejm established compulsory service to the Grand Duchy (e.g., in the areas of castle construction and maintenance, road construction and maintenance, and the provision of transportation to high-ranking officials, among other things). Fourth, the General Sejm determined the regulations concerning taxation: the amount to be paid, the period in which taxes must be paid, the method of collection, the exaction of unpaid taxes, measures to prevent tax evasion, and the penalties for tax collector fraud, as well as the purposes for which monies from taxes were to be used. Fifth, the General Sejm dictated which goods could only be imported or exported by the government and set the customs fees. Sixth, the General Sejm entered into loan agreements with both domestic and foreign entities. Seventh, the General Sejm entered into alliances and national unions. Such were the major issues that fell under the authority of the General Sejm to resolve.

The scope of the General Sejm's authority, however, was never set by law. In other words, prior to the 16th century, there was no specific legal basis for the legislative power of the General Sejm. Instead, the legislative authority of the General Sejm was derived from the fact that it met year after year, to resolve the same set of issues. It was only during the middle of the 16th century that the Lithuanian Statute of 1566 granted the General Sejm a legal basis for resolving matters concerning national defense and the power to enact new legislation. From this point onward, the General Sejm thereby received its authority not just from tradition, but from the legal code as well. Nonetheless, there was no legal guarantee that the government would not infringe upon the rights of the General Sejm. However, it was understood that if the government independently set out to resolve issues that were within the scope of the legislative authority of the General Sejm, the szlachta would petition for all legislation passed in this way to be annulled. Furthermore, it was quite possible for the laws independently passed by the government without the consent of the General Sejm to simply not be followed or enforced.

The General Sejm was usually called to assembly by the grand duke,[267] who did so either at his own discretion or based on guidance from the Council of Lords. The General Sejm was called to assembly through written letters addressed to its members.[268] The Sejm usually met in the capital of the Grand Duchy, Vilnius, although it sometimes convened in other cities as well (most commonly Brest and Grodno). On the other hand, military sejms coincided with the assembly of state military forces. Their locations therefore varied, depending on the military objectives at the time. Because the General Sejm assembled out of sheer necessity, the frequency and duration of its assembly were never known ahead of time. The era of the 1560s was especially rich with General Sejm

assemblies, as the war with Moscow intensified. Landowners were thus forced to make even greater personal and material sacrifices in order to continue the war. The legislature was tasked with improving the organization of government, in terms of both its military and finances. Furthermore, to support the szlachta (which had to bear the brunt of the war), the legislature granted it a wide array of rights and privileges. Incapable of continuing the war on its own, Lithuania was forced to turn to a union with Poland and Livonia in the interest of mutual defense. It is understandable that all these urgent matters could only be resolved through the assembly of the General Sejm.

Since the resolutions of the General Sejm derived their authority from the collective presence of all its members, attendance was mandatory for all members. In practice, this requirement resulted in very crowded conditions, and therefore was never strictly adhered to. In order to discourage tardiness, various measures were implemented: members who arrived late were stripped of their right to vote for a certain number of sessions and were not allowed to object to any resolutions that had been enacted in their absence.

The Council of Lords and the szlachta each passed resolutions independently. This was because members of the Council of Lords differed significantly from the other members of the Sejm. The members of the Council of Lords were predominantly Lithuanian Catholics who firmly maintained national interests as their main priority. This was, in part, a result of their position in government serving all the oblasts, but also because their own land holdings were spread out across all the territories of the Grand Duchy.

Standing out from other members because of their significant affluence and unique positions in government (as advisors to the grand duke), the Council of Lords formed a distinct assembly within the Sejm. This assembly examined all matters separately, through the lens of their unique perspective. In this way, the

General Sejm was effectively divided into two separate groups: the Council of Lords and the szlachta. This second group, composed of local representatives, met prior to the beginning of the Sejm to discuss pertinent issues that were to be resolved during the Sejm session.

At the root of this division were significant differences in local cultural background that manifested themselves in extremely varied local interests and polar opposite objectives. That being said, the final resolutions of the General Sejm were produced through the collaborative effort of both the Council of Lords and szlachta. The resolutions agreed upon by the body of the Sejm were then sent to the grand duke to be ratified. It is important to note that the resolutions required the unanimous approval of all members of the Sejm. This stipulation would later be expressed in the form of the famous "liberum veto,"[269] considered to be the founding principle of freedom for the nobility and the cornerstone of szlachta liberty.

The resolutions of the General Sejm, then, only went into effect on the national level when they received the unanimous approval of the entire legislative body. This meant that any oblast could reject a resolution by not offering its approval, thereby exempting itself from all stipulations contained in that resolution.[270] It is not surprising that the requirement for unanimity was a major cause of delay in the legislative proceedings. Furthermore, it was often abused by unscrupulous members of the Sejm to stall or end the assembly altogether. The latter was often employed by foreign agents (through influencing individual delegates) to interfere in the domestic affairs of Lithuania, thereby weakening its military forces. That being said, unanimous approval was often reached by the General Sejm. The principal driving force behind this consensus, especially in the 16th century, were the external threats that the General Sejm was tasked with addressing. Coercive measures were

also sometimes pursued to ensure unanimity, however. For example, the majority would try to persuade, threaten, or even physically force the dissenting minority to agree.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the establishment of the General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was of greater interest to Lithuania proper than the lands of Lithuanian Rus'. The involvement of Rus'ians in the General Sejm was not a result of the spread of Lithuanian government practices and rights to lands of the Western Rus' (Lithuania was too weak for this to occur), but rather was a sacrifice of autonomy on behalf of these Rus'ian regions. In other words, for the lands of Rus' under Lithuanian control, participation in the General Sejm significantly limited their sovereignty.

The General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was established for two reasons. The first was a collective fight for survival: to unite all the regions of the Grand Duchy, so as to withstand attacks by Moscow and the Crimean Tatars. The second was a strengthening of the szlachta—to support the class of citizens whose primary responsibility was to defend the nation and bear the burden of war. Poland attempted to further bolster the rights of the Lithuanian szlachta, trying to restructure the Lithuanian social class system to be more closely aligned with its own. Thus, in the event of a union, Poland would have Lithuanian partners upon which it could rely. It turns out that these attempts, which proved to be successful, closely coincided with particular trends in Lithuanian history that could already be observed by the end of the 15th century: the concentration of government authority and a strengthening of the szlachta.

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243 The word used in the original Russian is сейм (plural: сеймы), a transliteration of the Polish sejm (plural: sejmy). Although this term is actually

seĭmas (plural: seimaĭ) in Lithuanian, the editorial decision was made to use the Polish variant in part for consistency (sejm, oblast sejm, the diminutive sejmik, General Sejm of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, and later, General Sejm of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth). It is believed that this better illustrates the historical progression from the local seimaĭ to the General Sejm, while at the same time reflecting the reality that Lithuania was the junior, subordinate, partner in the association.

244 The word область (oblast) could be translated into English as either region or county, depending on the context.

245 Note: For example, in 1428, Vytautas the Great, while visiting the oblasts under his control, also visited Smolensk, Kyiv, and Lutsk. Grand Duke Casimir IV, upon the conclusion of the Lithuanian sejm of 1451, visited the Rus'ian oblasts—Smolensk, Vitebsk, and Polotsk—where he remained for the entire winter.

246 Note: Burghers also participated at the Smolensk, Polotsk, and Vitebsk sejms.

247 Note: This sejm convened after the death of Grand Duke Casimir IV, to elect his successor.

248 Note: This is evident upon examination of the historical context. While the Union of Lublin was still being developed, the Lithuanian delegates planned to limit the scope of authority of the General Sejm to three main duties: the election of officials, the resolution of matters pertaining to war and peace, and the establishment of taxes to fund the military. All other matters were to be resolved through the assembly of oblast sejms.

249 Note: At the time when Poland and Lithuania were only weakly linked by a Union, the grand duke was frequently absent from Lithuania. He only became a permanent presence at the Sejm in 1569, when the ties between Poland and Lithuania were strengthened by the establishment of the Polish-Lithuanian General Sejm.

250 As mentioned in Chapter 10, the magnate social class of wealthy and influential nobility arose around the 16th century, over time gaining increasing influence over Commonwealth politics. Because of the extent of their power and independence, the most powerful among them were known as "little kings."

251 In the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and Lithuanian Rus', a voivode (in Russian, воевода) was a noble with administrative duties appointed for life by the grand duke to be the governor and military commander of a province, called a *zemlia* ("land") or, beginning in 1413, a voivodeship (palatinate), following the Polish model. A voivode was simultaneously a member of the Council of Lords.

252 Note: Invitations addressed to the Hetman cannot be found among existing Sejm documents. This can be explained, however, by the fact that the duties of

the Chancellor and Hetman were normally combined with those of other positions.

253 Chief commander of the army, subordinate only to the grand duke.

254 Low-ranking officials (in the original Russian, каштелян).

255 Elders (in the original Russian, староста).

256 Note: Toward the end of the period that constitutes the focus of this volume, only the governors of Vilnius and Žemaitija (also referred to as Samogitia) attended the Sejm.

257 Note: The participation of the szlachta in the General Sejm can be traced back to 1544 under the rule of Sigismund I.

258 Burgher (in Russian, мещанин) was a rank or title bestowed upon privileged citizens of medieval towns in early modern Europe. Burghers, whose immediate families formed the social class of the medieval bourgeoisie (in the original Russian text, мещанство), constituted the pool from which city officials could be drawn. At the end of the 13th century, under Polish-Lithuanian rule when Magdeburg rights were granted to many cities and towns, the burghers became a separate stratum.

259 Note: Beginning in the 1560s, the burghers of Vilnius gained additional rights. In 1568, they were even granted the ability to send their mayors (technically, burgomasters/burgermeisters) to the General Sejm.

260 Žemaitija (formerly also known in Lithuanian as Samogitia or in English as Lower Lithuania) is one of the country's five ethnographic regions, located in present-day northwestern Lithuania. Žemaitija became a part of Lithuania in 1422, through the Treaty of Melno.

261 Note: For example, members of the clergy were usually absent from these military sejms, as they were not obligated to participate in military campaigns. Furthermore, for strategic purposes, the military often broke up into multiple units. Thus, not all members of the military could participate in a particular military sejm.

262 Note: For example, during the Election Sejm of 1492 (during the war with Moscow), only the elder princes and lords were called upon to participate. The number of members sent to this Sejm was determined individually for each region by the local landowners.

263 Sejmik, the diminutive form of sejm, may have come into use in Poland (and later in Lithuania when it adopted the powiat sejmik) to highlight the fact that these meetings were smaller and occurred on a more local level than regular sejms.

264 Note: The division of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania into powiats occurred from 1564–1565 for judicial purposes. This coincided with the establishment of

the sejmiks. The Vilnius and Trakai Voivodeships (a voivodeship was equivalent to a duchy or province) contained the greatest number of powiats.

265 Note: Their participation in the sejmiks was required. Officials that did not appear at a sejmik were subject to a fine. Although members of the szlachta were not penalized with a fine in the case of absence, their right to argue against resolutions passed in their absence was revoked.

266 Note: The representatives of the local landowners—the state delegates— could also hold public office, which they would have to be elected to at the powiat sejmiks.

267 Note: One notable exception occurred in 1525 when the Voivode of Vilnius, Albertas Goštautas, convened the General Sejm in Vilnius without waiting for the approval of the grand duke.

268 Note: Invitations were only personally delivered to high-ranking addressees: members of the Council of Lords and upper nobility. The lower-ranking members of the Sejm (e.g., the powiat szlachta) were informed of their invitation through public announcements made at the market square in front of a church.

269 A parliamentary practice that allowed any member of the Sejm to object to any measure and thereby suspend deliberations.

270 Note: For example, during the General Sejm of 1520, the officials of the Samogitian lands did not agree to vote for a particular tax. Also, in 1564, the same officials did not agree to enforce certain judicial reforms they did not approve of.

Appendix III
The Privileges of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania

The first written laws of Lithuania and their sources. State, oblast, and local privileges. Privileges of various social classes and individual privileges.

During the late 14th century, written laws began to appear in Lithuania as it strengthened its ties with Poland. Previously, legal relationships were maintained through custom and tradition. These customs played such a central role in the governance of the Grand Duchy that they served as the basis for the majority of written laws established during the pre-Statute era. Laws enacted prior to the compilation of the Lithuanian Statute[271] took on the form of privileges, charters, and orders. Among these forms of legislation, privileges, which determined the rights of the various social classes, were most common.

These privileges were applied at different levels of government: state privileges, for the entire Grand Duchy; oblast privileges, for a particular region; and local privileges, for a specific city. Moreover, certain privileges were only applied to distinct social classes and ethnic groups, while others were applied to individual citizens. The grand dukes of Lithuania were incentivized to issue privileges for three major reasons. First, privileges were issued as awards to dutiful Lithuanian nobles for their service, which often involved a transfer of land on the part of the noble to the Grand Duchy. Second, privileges were issued to promote future service to the Grand Duchy. Third, privileges were issued to prevent inter-class conflicts.

State privileges, applied to the entire Grand Duchy, were primarily issued to benefit the nobility, which held a significant

amount of power. The influence of these state privileges, however, was greatly reduced by the more broadly applied local and oblast privileges.[272] Since the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was composed of individual oblasts and lands that varied greatly in terms of ethnic and religious tradition, it follows that this diversity gave rise to the need for oblast privileges. Cities, on the verge of collapse as a result of frequent wars and harsh rule, sought to gain autonomy in their administration and their courts. This was achieved through local privileges that granted the cities Magdeburg rights.

The weak development of public law (a product of harsh rule by officers of the Grand Duchy that resulted in the impoverishment of the general population) led certain social classes, guilds, ethnic groups, and individuals to work to secure a large number of rights, so that those in power and other social classes would not be able to take them away. As a result, laws were enacted to outline the rights and obligations of the Orthodox clergy, gentry, Jews, Tatars, and others. It was also not uncommon for privileges to be issued to individuals. The wide variety of privileges lost their previous validity, however, with the enactment of the Lithuanian Statute.

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271 For a closer examination of the Lithuanian Statute, please see Appendix IV.

272 The local and oblast privileges were taken more seriously than the state privileges mainly because the state privileges applied for the most part only to the ruling class, whereas the local and oblast privileges affected the majority of inhabitants. For this reason, these local and oblast privileges could be considered more authoritative (although the state privileges carried the same weight legally, as these were all privileges).

Appendix IV
The Lithuanian Statute

The development of the Statute. The Lithuanian Statute of 1529 and its contents. The revision of the Statute. The publication of the Statutes of 1566 and 1588. The replacement of the Statute by the laws of Russia.

The first mentions of the "Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" (sometimes referred to as the "State Statute") can be found in documents from the late 15th and early 16th centuries. At the time, however, the term "statute" was not understood to be a set legal code, but rather referred to all the charters, orders, and privileges (pertaining to both the state and oblast[273]) enacted by the grand duke of Lithuania and his council. A unified legal code began to be recognized in Lithuania as a necessity at the outset of the 16th century. This need for a unified legal code was prompted not only by the call to give the courts specific guidance instead of the previous vague and sometimes contradictory assortment of orders and privileges, but also by the desire on the part of a newly strengthened szlachta[274] to free itself from the rule of the Grand Duchy.

It is important to note the determination on the part of Alexander Jagiellon[275] to issue a unified Statute, which is clearly evident in his privilege enacted in 1501 in the Volyn Oblast. The decision to codify the law was finalized during the Vilnius Sejm[276] of 1514, when the members of the Sejm presented Grand Duke Sigismund I with a petition to issue a unified Statute. The formation of such a legal code was one of the conditions that had to be met if the szlachta was to continue to support the war against Moscow, which had just become very intense and had resulted in the loss of Smolensk.

Finally, in 1522, Sigismund I issued a privilege that reaffirmed all previously issued privileges and orders of the szlachta. On December 6 of the same year, during a session of the Vilnius Sejm, a decree was made to grant Lithuania a "unified, written code of law." The compilation of this legal code was completed by 1529 and was ratified as the "Lithuanian Statute" the same year. The first edition of the "Lithuanian Statute" was in Rus'ian. It was published in Latin one year later and in Polish after three years.

The first edition of the Statute of 1529 consisted of 13 sections divided into 282 articles. The intention of producing a structured legal code can be observed from the organization of the sections and articles: the first three sections are concerned with public administration, while the following ten sections expand upon civil law, criminal law, and the organization of the courts. The Lithuanian Statute of 1529 contains a whole host of legal policies that originate from Russkaya Pravda:[277] entire sections of the Statute are constructed in the same manner. The Statute draws from other sources as well.

The first sections (regarding the entity of the ruling class, defense policy, and the rights of the szlachta) are primarily based on previous state privileges and orders. In other sections, one can find articles based on Polish and even Roman legal codes (e.g., Section 8, "On Inheritance"). However, there is a far greater number of sections and articles (e.g., "On the Courts," "On Guardianship," "On Robbery," "On Evildoing") that are clearly similar, and sometimes even identical, to the laws set forth in Russkaya Pravda. This can be explained by the fact that for the most part, Polish law influenced the organization of government in Lithuania, as well as the relations between various social classes. In terms of criminal law, civil law, and the organization of the courts, the Statute is based on the same founding principles as those of

Russkaya Pravda. The similarity between these two legal codes is not a coincidence. Rather, this points to the common understanding of justice shared by Lithuania and Rus'[278] during the era of the Lithuanian Statute and Russkaya Pravda.

The Statute was not without its flaws. The legal code turned out to be a poor reflection of cultural developments, prescribed extremely high criminal fines, contained outdated and harsh laws, and most importantly—because of recent changes to the structure of Lithuanian government—lost its relevance. As a result, during the Brest Sejm of 1544, the Lithuanian szlachta petitioned Sigismund I to revise the Statute, although the actual revisions would take place under Sigismund II Augustus during the Sejms of 1564 and 1565. This revised version of the original code of laws, named the "Second Statute," was ratified during the Vilnius Sejm of 1566. The union of Lithuania with Poland in 1569 once again called for revision of the Statute, to better represent the existing laws of Poland and Lithuania. Thus, the "Second Statute" was revised during sessions of the powiat[279] sejms and ratified during the Convocation Sejm of 1584 in Vawkavysk. Shortly thereafter, the compilation of a new Statute was proposed during the Warsaw Election Sejm of 1587. This new legal code, named the "Third Statute," was ratified during the Coronation Sejm of 1588. The same year, this Third Statute was published in Rus'ian by Crown Chancellor Lew Sapieha in Vilnius. This publication served as the original code of laws, whereas the various Polish translations, beginning in 1616, were applied only at the local level.

Upon the merging of Lithuania into the Russian empire in 1795, the Lithuanian Statute, in part, still remained in effect in Lithuanian counties. In 1840, however, the Statute was replaced by Russian imperial laws.

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273 The word "область" (oblast) could be translated into English as either region or county, depending on the context. When used in conjunction with the name of a large city, as in "Volyn Oblast" (below), it is usually best understood to mean region. Here it may be best understood as county.

274 A legally privileged noble class in the Kingdom of Poland and in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. After the Union of Lublin in 1569, the Grand Duchy and its neighboring kingdom became a single state, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

275 Alexander Jagiellon (1461–1506) was the grand duke of Lithuania and later also king of Poland (of the House of Jagiellon), the fourth son of Casimir IV Jagiellon (1427–1492). He is mentioned in the preceding text, in Chapters 13, 14, 17, and 23.

276 During the historical period under discussion, the Lithuanian term sejm refers to large meetings of members of the nobility at which policy decisions were discussed. The first traces of large nobility meetings can be found in the negotiations for the Treaty of Salynas in 1398. The first sejm, however, is considered to have convened in Grodno in 1445 during talks between Casimir IV Jagiellon and the Council of Lords. The word's meaning as the unicameral parliament of Lithuania, the legislative branch of government, dates from the country's declaration of independence in 1918. The subject of sejms is covered extensively in Appendix II.

277 ("Rus' Justice" or "Rus' Truth"): The legal code of Kyivan Rus' and the subsequent principalities of Rus' during the times of feudal division, first written at the beginning of the 12th century.

278 To reiterate a note presented in Chapter 3, Kyivan or Kievan Rus' was a loose federation of East Slavic and Finno-Ugric peoples in Europe from the late 9th to the mid-13th century, under the reign of the Varangian Rurik dynasty (founded in 862). The modern nations of Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine all claim Kyivan Rus' as their cultural ancestors, with Belarus and Russia deriving their names therefrom.

279 Equivalent to a district or район in present-day Russia.

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280 The editor has made some corrections and enhancements to the original list of sources, providing the full names of the authors and titles for those that could be located. Those entries for which bibliographic information was missing and could not be located have been left as is. Links to copies of texts available online at the time this centennial edition was produced have been added. Some of the sources apply to the content that would have been published in volume two, which apparently never came out (see editor's introduction). This list of sources appears in the original text toward the end of the author's preface. For purposes of this edition, it was moved to the end of the book, to be more consistent with contemporary practices. In addition to the written sources consulted, the author also interviewed knowledgeable individuals, such as those mentioned by name in the preface.

Caricature of student at preparatory academy in Kaunas cofounded by Josef A.
Katzel
(drawn by the author in November 1918)
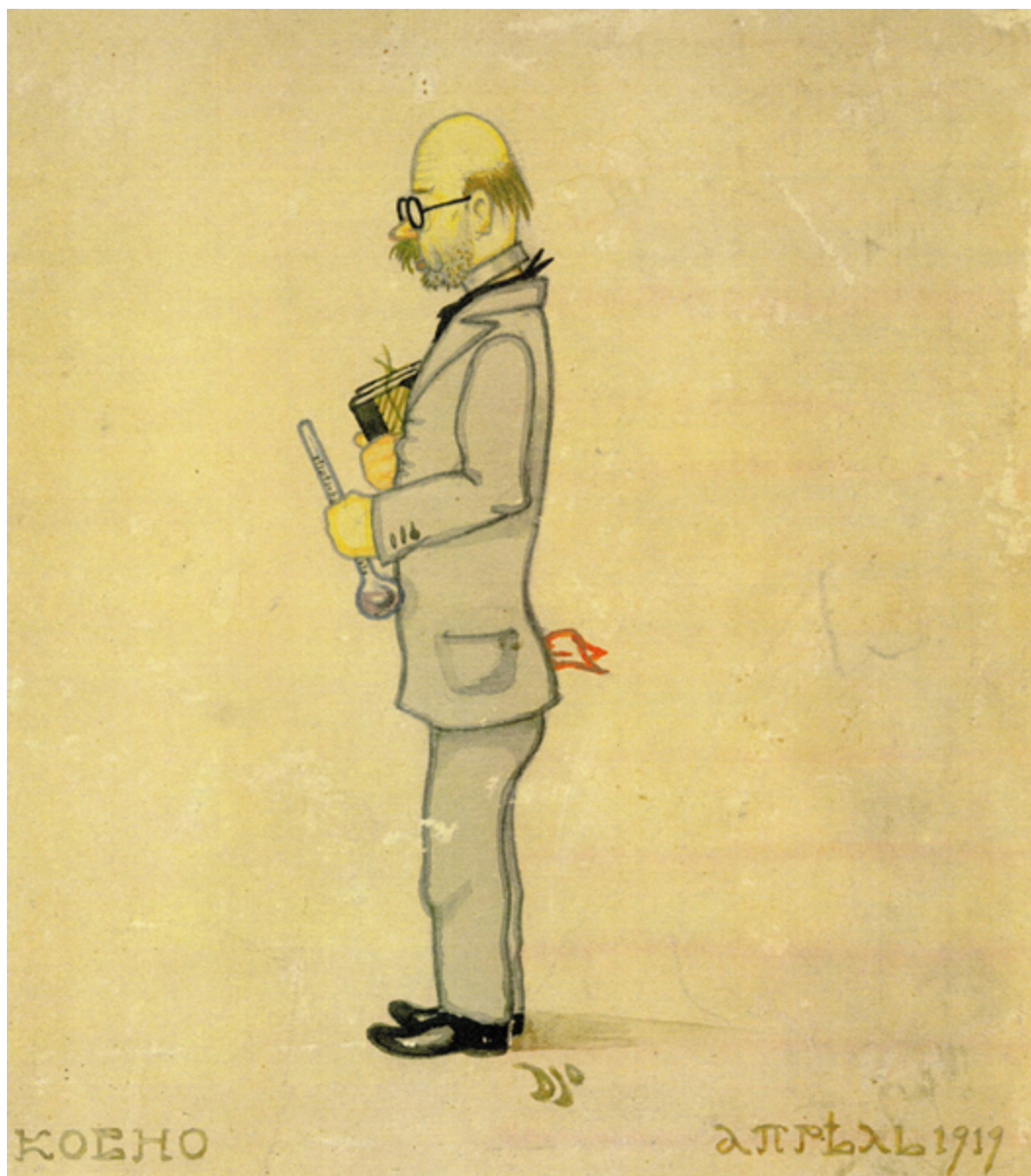
Caricature of teacher at preparatory academy in Kaunas cofounded by Josef A.
Katzel
(drawn by the author in August 1919)